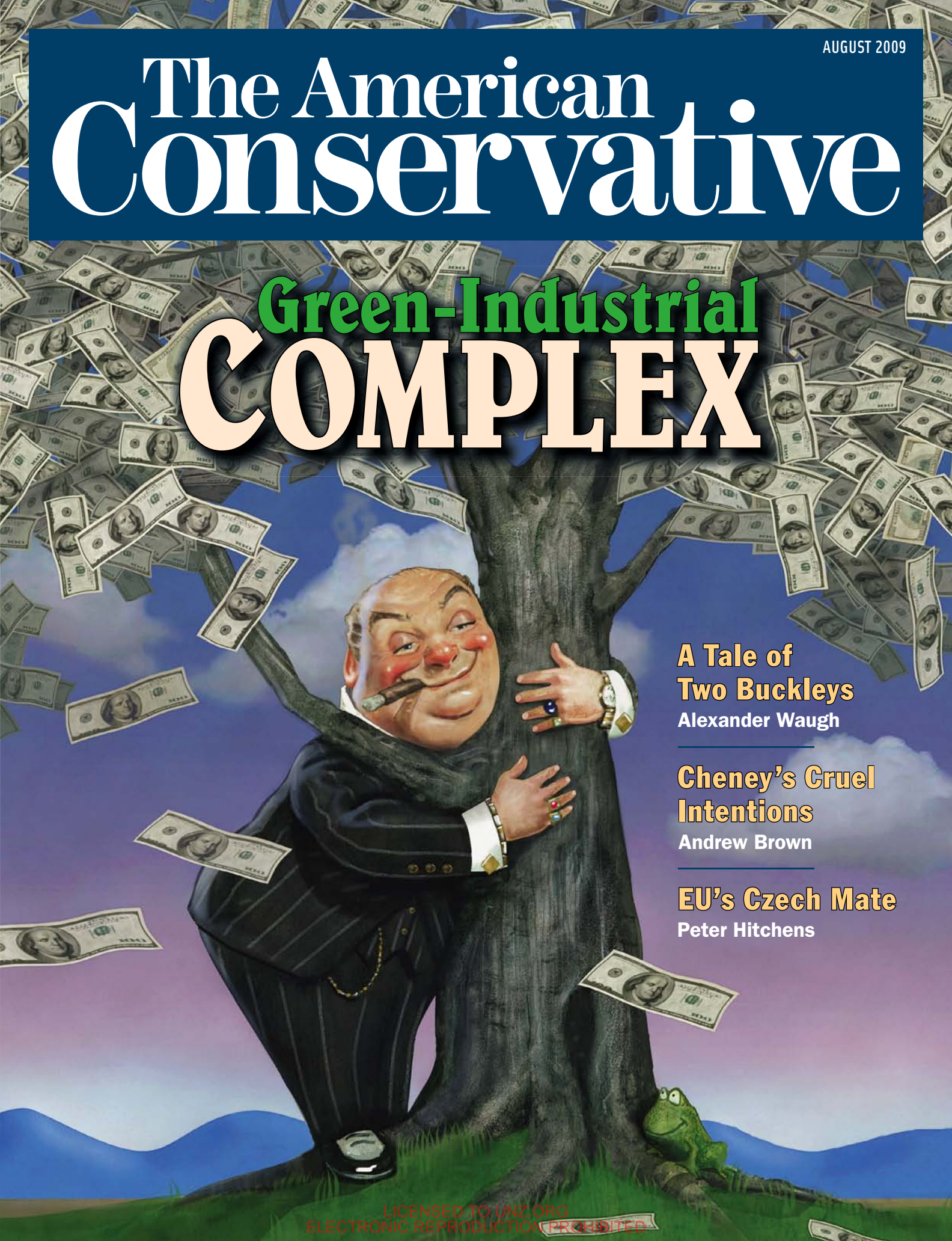


AUGUST 2009

The American Conservative

Green-Industrial COMPLEX



**A Tale of
Two Buckleys**
Alexander Waugh

**Cheney's Cruel
Intentions**
Andrew Brown

EU's Czech Mate
Peter Hitchens

Brent Scowcroft Robert Gallucci Geoffrey Wheatcroft David Kay
Paul Collier Milton Bearden Leslie Gelb Minxin Pei Richard Betts
John Bolton Lawrence Freedman Stephen Walt Raymond Bonner



Don't Miss Daily Commentary From Today's Foreign-Policy Heavyweights
Richard Lugar, Dimitri Simes, Bing West & Many More

www.nationalinterest.org

Contents

August 2009 / Vol. 8, No. 11

COLUMNS

- 11 Patrick J. Buchanan:** Tehran's Tiananmen
19 Stuart Reid: Health of the State
35 Rand Paul: The Public Trough
51 Bill Kauffman: Hush, Hush Sweet Charlotte

NEWS & VIEWS

- 4 Front Lines:** Second Iranian Revolution?; Cap and Trade by Fiat; What Is the Fed Hiding?; Broken Bonds
29 Deep Background: Emanuel Shall Come to Thee, O Israel

ARTICLES

- 12 Andrew Brown:** Dick Cheney's cruel intentions
20 Peter Hitchens: Twenty years after the Soviets left, the Czechs confront a new tyranny.
24 David S. Brown: In pronouncing the end of history, America missed its chance for a new beginning.
33 Jeff Huber: Doug Feith sends civilians on a mission impossible.
36 Alex Massie: Will scandal bring down the mother of parliaments?
38 Kelley Beaucar Vlahos: Liberal hawks in waiting
40 R.J. Stove: The lure of light verse

ARTS & LETTERS

- 43 Justin Raimondo:** *Spies: The Rise and Fall of the KGB in America* by John Earl Haynes, Harvey Klehr, and Alexander Vassiliev and *Alger Hiss and the Battle for History* by Susan Jacoby
46 Alexander Waugh: *Losing Mum and Pup: A Memoir* by Christopher Buckley
47 John R. Coyne Jr.: *Conservatives: Ideas and Personalities Throughout American History* by Patrick Allitt
49 David Gordon: *The Future of Liberalism* by Alan Wolfe



AFP LIVE TWO

[COVER]

Green-Industrial Complex

BY BRENDAN O'NEILL The environmental lobby learns that saving the planet means big business. **Page 8**

[FIRST PERSON]

Interrogation Enhanced

BY MATTHEW ALEXANDER The American officer who broke the Zarqawi network explains why talking works better than torture. **Page 14**

[ECONOMICS]

Bringing Down the House

BY CHARLES HUGH SMITH Why the mortgage bubble won't reinflate **Page 27**

[WAR]

Russian Lessons

BY PAUL ROBINSON Must we repeat Soviet mistakes in Afghanistan? **Page 30**

COVER ILLUSTRATION: CHRIS HIERS

[WORLD]

SALUTARY NEGLECT

Neoconservative Daniel Pipes, at least, had cause to rejoice over Iran's June 13 elections, whose hotly disputed official results had hardline president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad cruising to re-election over moderate challenger Mir-Hossein Mousavi 63 to 34 percent. Said Pipes at an American Enterprise Institute panel days before, "I'm sometimes asked who I would vote for if I were enfranchised in this election, and I think I would, with due hesitance, vote for Ahmadinejad."

Worse, for Pipes and his confrères, is better—since President Ahmadinejad makes scaring up a case for war with Iran so much easier. In a post-election blog for *Commentary*, Max Boot declared, "a win for Ahmadinejad is also a win for those of us who are seriously alarmed about Iranian capabilities and intentions." He hoped President Obama might respond by "tacitly giving the go-ahead to Israel to attack [Iran's] nuclear installations."

But Iran's students and other groups supporting Mousavi were much less pleased with the outcome than were U.S. hawks. Decrying irregularities in the vote—pro-Mousavi poll watchers had been intimidated, they said, and in some places voter turnout appeared to exceed 100 percent—Iranians took to the streets in the largest demonstrations since the Islamic Revolution. Ahmadinejad and his sponsor, Iran's Supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei, responded predictably, unleashing police and Basij militia against the protestors.

Yet not all of the ayatollahs have sided with Ahmadinejad: Grand Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri, the onetime designated successor to Ayatollah Khomeini released a remarkable statement calling for scrutiny of the election results and for the police to back off. While advising the protestors to stay calm and

"not let those who want to associate this movement with chaos succeed," he warned the police and army to "beware that receiving orders will not excuse them before God. Recognize the protesting youth as your children."

The turmoil in Tehran, center of the protests, has prompted Americans of many political shades to call on Obama not to recognize the results of Iran's elections. Neoconservatives looking for a new angle to provoke discord have now begun to demand that Obama denounce Ahmadinejad and endorse the protestors (who are not, it should be noted, Western liberals: Robert Fisk reports hearing the chant, "Zionist Ahmadinejad—cheating at exams.") Yet it is far from clear that the Iranian regime, corrupt as it is, stole the election. And whether it did or not, American intervention, even verbal support for the protests, can only undermine Ahmadinejad's opposition.

Whether this proves to be another abortive Tiananmen or whether Mousavi's supporters succeed, like East Germans in 1989, in bringing about regime change at home, the United States can help best by refraining from any attempt to manage the internal politics of a country far, and very different, from our own.



R.J. WATSON WWW.CAGLECARTOONS.COM

[FED]

NO RESERVATION

To fix the financial system, Team Obama wants to expand the power of the Federal Reserve. The plan? Grant the Fed full authority to oversee systemic risk regulation—or, in wonk-speak, "enhanced macroprudential powers"—so as to avert financial crises in future.

But wait. Wasn't the Fed's mishandling of its already vast regulatory remit in large part to blame for our current crisis? Apparently not. "In order to rely on responsibility being exercised," intoned Lawrence Summers, Obama's top economic adviser (strongly tipped, it just so happens, to be the next Fed chairman), "you do need to have enough authority to ensure responsibility." That's the logic of failure: if someone is not doing his job properly, give him a promotion.

Deep in the belly of American democracy, however, a loud grumble can be heard. Congressman Ron Paul's Federal Reserve Transparency Act is fast gathering popular support. As *TAC* went to press, the legislation, which calls for the Fed's trillion-dollar-spewing credit and funding facilities to be exposed to public scrutiny, had drawn 232 co-sponsors in the House and was increasingly being noted on the newswires.

"The American people have had enough," said Dr. Paul's Campaign for Liberty president John Tate, "enough of an out of control Fed, enough of runaway government spending, and enough of the secretive Federal Reserve practices that won't even allow us to know where our money is going." Say it again, John.

Veteran politicians dismiss the "audit the Fed" cries as kooky. Yet whereas Obama's plan is to make everyone accountable to the central bank, this proposal aims to make central banking accountable to everyone. What could be wrong with that?

[ENTITLEMENTS]

HE PLAYS ONE ON TV

It's bold political jujutsu to argue, in the midst of a recession, that not spending \$1 trillion to overhaul the American healthcare system poses "one of the greatest threats ... to the very foundation of our economy." But audacity comes easily to President Obama—as well it should. Has he not, in mere months, gained control of the nation's banks, mortgages, and auto industry? He sees no sector that isn't a legitimate federal interest. So why shouldn't he have a say in our most intimate, flesh-and-blood concerns?

American healthcare is in sick shape. But not because government has been too aloof. Indeed, the partnership of politicians and the insurance industry has yielded the managed-care mess that ties coverage to employment, sending costs higher than individuals can reasonably afford.

This gives Obama his opening. With breadwinners increasingly out of work, families live in fear that a serious illness will bankrupt them. Of course, someone must pay for "free" healthcare, but a growing constituency knows that they will not be called upon to shoulder the burden—at least not now.

Advocates of nationalization speak as if millions are dying in our gutters, turned away because they cannot pay. Yet our elderly and indigent are already covered by government programs not known for their economy. America isn't suffering a crisis of care. We have an insurance problem—brought on by government manipulation of the healthcare market.

Naturally, Washington plans to fix this by further intruding. Massive bills have begun to lumber through Congress—Sen. Ted Kennedy's tops 600 pages, with 388 amendments. All are packed with bureaucratic contortions and lobbyist-approved loopholes.

But rather than loosing the Beltway Boys to test their theories on the body politic, why not ask them to point to a working model they admire? Because they can't. Socialized medicine has been tried, and no global test case yields affordable, efficient, high-quality results.

No matter. This isn't about achieving results so much as installing ideology. That's why millions are willing to entrust the nation's health to someone who knows as much about running hospitals as he does about building cars.

[INDUSTRY]

CHRYSLER BLOWOUT

For sale: several dozen auto plants staffed with tens of thousands of experienced workers in what remains the world's largest market for cars. The price? Free—at least if you can convince retrograde Americans, used to driving the largest passenger vehicles on the planet, that they should all buy diminutive coupes. This is no easy task. Americans are happy to zip around in fuel-efficient runabouts when on holiday in the old countries, but here at home, they are the stuff of crash-test-dummy nightmares.

Our hopeful president dismisses these fears. Using \$10 billion in taxpayer funds, President Obama has shored up

The American Conservative

Publisher
Ron Unz

Editor at Large
Scott McConnell

Executive Editor
Kara Hopkins

Senior Editor
Daniel McCarthy

Literary Editor
Freddy Gray

Contributing Editors

W. James Antle III, Andrew J. Bacevich, Doug Bandow, Jeremy Beer, James Bovard, Patrick Deneen, Michael Desch, Richard Gamble, Philip Giraldi, David Gordon, Paul Gottfried, Leon Hadar, Peter Hitchens, Philip Jenkins, Daniel Larison, Christopher Layne, Eric S. Margolis, James P. Pinkerton, Justin Raimondo, Fred Reed, Stuart Reid, Sheldon Richman, Steve Sailer, John Schwenkler, R.J. Stove, Kelley B. Vlahos, Thomas E. Woods Jr.

Art Director
Mark Graef

Associate Publisher
Jon Basil Utley

Publishing Consultant
Ronald E. Burr

Editorial Assistant
Lewis McCrary

Founding Editors

Patrick J. Buchanan, Taki Theodoracopulos

The American Conservative, Vol. 8, No. 11, August 2009 (ISSN 1540-966X). Reg. U.S. Pat. & Tm. Off. TAC is published 12 times per year for \$49.97 per year by The American Conservative, LLC, 1300 Wilson Blvd., Suite 120, Arlington, VA, 22209. Periodicals postage paid at Arlington, VA, and additional mailing offices. Printed in the United States of America. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The American Conservative*, P.O. Box 9030, Maple Shade, NJ 08052-9030.

Subscription rates: \$49.97 per year (12 issues) in the U.S., \$69.97 in Canada (U.S. funds), and \$89.97 other foreign via airmail. Back issues: \$6.00 (prepaid) per copy in USA, \$7.00 in Canada (U.S. funds).

For subscription orders, payments, and other subscription inquiries—

By phone: **800-579-6148**
(outside the U.S./Canada 856-380-4131)

Via Web: www.amconmag.com

By mail: *The American Conservative*, P.O. Box 9030, Maple Shade, NJ 08052-9030

Please allow 6-8 weeks for delivery of your first issue.

Inquiries and letters to the editor should be sent to letters@amconmag.com. For advertising sales call Ronald Burr at 703-893-3632. For editorial, call 703-875-7600.

This issue went to press on June 18, 2009.

Copyright 2009 *The American Conservative*.

a United Auto Workers pension plan, created a New Deal-scale jobs program, and forced what remains of Chrysler to manufacture the type of vehicle that meets the goals of his most recent five-year plan. In exchange for access to cutting-edge Italian technology, Obama is handing Chrysler's keys over to a firm that once made tanks for Mussolini. For no money down, the Feds are giving Fiat control of Chrysler's extensive manufacturing and dealer network. If the Italians can convince Americans to buy their new offerings and repay at least some of Uncle Sam's loans propping up the Chrysler infrastructure, Fiat will become the majority owner.

For many Washington bureaucrats, the failure of Chrysler is the perfect opportunity to remake American car culture from the top down. But the majority of Americans have no desire to hit the interstate in something that previously passed for a child's toy. Unfortunately for them, Washington knows best. You can bet that its officials will continue to travel in armored SUV's.

[FINANCE]

SIGNAL FAILURE

British economic historian Niall Ferguson and Nobel Prize-winning neo-Keynesian economist Paul Krugman have been duking it out. Their clash began at an April 30 *New York Review of Books*/PEN panel on "The Crisis and How to Deal With It." At issue is the recent rise in interest rates on long-term Treasury debt. To Ferguson, the climb portends inflation, brought on by the Federal Reserve's rock-bottom interest rates and the Obama administration's record-smashing deficits. "Even if the White House's over-optimistic growth forecasts are correct," Ferguson warns, "that will still take the gross federal debt above 100 percent of GDP by 2012." And that's without taking account of entitlements deficits.

Krugman, true to Keynesian form, believes that the economic crisis is down to a "global savings glut," for which loose credit and stimulus spending are the answer. Rising Treasury yields can only be a good thing, according to Krugman, since they imply that investors are putting their money into riskier, potentially more profitable financial instruments—signaling that a recovery is on the way.

The data don't provide a clear answer. Ten-year Treasury rates have spiked from a 2.24 percent in October 2008 to as high as 3.98 percent in early June. But that's still below the rates that prevailed in the 1970s and 1980s, when 10-year yields never dipped below 5.53 percent and topped out in July 1981 at 15.84 percent. The spike since October is not hard to explain in reassuring terms: as bubbles burst late last year, money fled to Treasuries as a safe haven, suddenly depressing rates, which have since corrected. If rates keep rising so quickly, Ferguson may be proved right—certainly Bernanke and Obama have created the conditions for explosive inflation sooner or later. But the numbers don't say what will happen in the near term.

And perhaps the numbers won't say even in the long term. Financial journalist John Carney suggests that the Bush-Bernanke-Obama bailouts have broken the bond markets, destroying their signaling function. "That's because there are now way too many debt instruments that are the functional equivalent of treasuries," he writes. "We have a lot of bank debt floating around that is backed by the FDIC explicitly, for example. And even the new debt that banks are issuing without explicit government guarantees is backed by a semi-explicit guarantee voiced by politicians who have promised 'no more Lehmans.'" In short, "why buy treasuries when you get a better return from bank debt that is just as safe?"

If Carney is right, the U.S. economy could be doubly imperiled—not only by impending inflation but by reckless fiscal policies that have killed the canary in the proverbial mineshaft.

[LIBERTIES]

BIG GOVERNMENT'S TOBACCO HABIT

Barack Obama can't quit smoking. But he isn't going to let Americans puff in peace. After the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act whisked through Senate and the House, the president waxed effusive. "I'm proud," he said. "This ... is a bill that truly defines change in Washington."

The legislation was presented as a way of protecting children and the nation's future health. Obama called it the "Kids Tobacco Bill." The government, by putting the smoking business under the control of the Food and Drug Administration, can shield the young and ignorant from the pernicious weed. Cigarette companies will not be allowed to advertise near schools. Tobacco flavorings—except menthol—will be prohibited, and health warnings on cigarette packaging will be made bolder and scarier. As if "SMOKING CAUSES LUNG CANCER" wasn't enough.

In reality, of course, the bill is a far-reaching—and arguably unconstitutional—nanny-state imposition on smokers and the tobacco trade. Under its terms, anybody involved in the manufacture, preparation, or processing of tobacco products is subject to FDA vetting. The government will further regulate nicotine levels and charge "user fees" (taxes) on the makers of cigarettes, inevitably driving up the price per pack. For the 20 percent of citizens who won't kick the habit—still gasping from a 250 percent federal tobacco tax hike in April—the message is clear: Obama is smoking you out. ■

RECOVERING DITTOHEAD

I just want to drop a quick note thanking you for being such an enlightened alternative to the political preachers: Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, and Mark Levin. It took me looking at the followers of each to see that doctrines founded on passion rather than honest, sober reflection create corrupt and/or stupid demagogues and a throng of copycat zombies.

When I first tried your magazine, I was disappointed that it wasn't a more in-depth version of the arguments on my shows—as if Hannity's repetitive thoughts could be taken to a level not easily understood or refuted by a 5-year-old. I saw antiwar stances as cowardice—the antithesis of the George S. Patton ideal against which I judged the merits of every politician's foreign policy. Then a friend showed me some Ron Paul videos on YouTube.

Ah! So we need not be missionaries after all? We need not “maintain” order in an increasingly chaotic world? That chaos is a sign to leave, not to stay in foreign countries? Abandoning recklessness and the errors of the foolhardy is not craven. Rather, it's like the fat man who stops eating donuts because he realizes how bad they are, despite his taste buds saying, “But they taste so good!”

After doing some more reading in the Paulian vein, I decided to try your magazine again. I subscribed, and you have served to empower my mind's revival since.

PHIL UNRUH
Via e-mail

LEARNING TO LOVE THE BOMB

Michael Desch clearly and conclusively argued that an Iranian nuclear weapon may actually stabilize the Middle East (May 18). There are two related observations one should make: It was fortunate that the Soviet Union developed its own atom bomb quickly. This prevented

a hothead on our side who, feeling secure in our nuclear supremacy, might have engaged in who knows what adventures, a la Iraq. And speaking of Iraq, if it had developed a nuclear weapon, we would have been spared this disastrous war. Some 5,000 Americans and 600,000 Iraqis would still be alive, 40,000 soldiers would have their arms and legs, and our Treasury would have saved \$1 trillion. Not a bad deal at all.

DEMETRIOS T. POLITIS
Ann Arbor, Mich.

APOCALYPSE NOW

With regard to John Mearsheimer's “Saving Israel From Itself” (May 18), only a fool would believe that Israel should give in. The Jewish people belong there. The Bible says so.

As a Christian, I believe they have the right to be there, and the bloodthirsty cult of Islam belongs in the bottom of the ocean. In the end times, every one of the followers of Islam will be in the lake of fire.

Want the Palestinians to have a place? Then carve out a portion of Jordan and give it to them. Any other country over there want them? NO. Why? Because every other Middle East country treats them like scum. This is all a farce to finish what Hitler started. And we should be openly on Israel's side, not the side of Hamas and Fatah.

May Jesus forgive your misguided loyalties.
STEPHEN KING
Via e-mail

MY FIRST TAC

I am very impressed by the article “Becoming Barbarians” (May 18) by Rod Dreher. If conservatives had been putting forth such perspectives rather than being mere handmaidens to neocon torturers, warmongers, and rabid capitalists, I'd have given you my ear much sooner.

If you want to lose me again, you can stand by Dick Cheney, who I think should already be on trial as the war criminal he is. Anyway, if “Becoming Barbarians” is what I can expect, you'll be gaining a reader and a new conservative.

ROY HURLEY
Denver, Colo.

P.S. “Found Cause” by Bill Kauffman is also impressive—very impressive.

WHIGGING OUT

Even such a learned scholar as David Bromwich (“Right Reflections,” May 18), who has edited Edmund Burke's letters, does not mention that Burke was a Whig, not a Tory, which is why he never described himself as a conservative. He called himself an “Old Whig,” a term that F.A. Hayek used to describe his own political center of gravity. The Old Whigs were those in the Whig Party who opposed the French Revolution.

Other than that, Burke has little in common with the conservatives. He supported the American colonists in seeking independence from the Crown and emphasized the importance of trade when the Tories still supported the anti-trade Corn Laws. The Whigs were the precursors of the Liberals, their leading statesman being Melbourne, a man who disliked change but sought to manage it when it was absolutely necessary to prevent a revolution.

Melbourne would have considered today's Republicans to be laughable, mostly because they have no class.

RICHARD CUMMINGS
Via e-mail

The American Conservative welcomes letters to the editor. Submit by e-mail to letters@amconmag.com, by fax to 703-875-3350, or by mail to 1300 Wilson Blvd., Suite 120, Arlington, VA 22209. Please include your name, address, and phone number. We reserve the right to edit all correspondence for space and clarity.

Green-Industrial Complex

Al Gore and his allies know the color of money.

By Brendan O'Neill

THE WORD “environmentalist” usually conjures images of dreadlocked campaigners in tie-dyed T-shirts who eat only organic muesli and never travel by car. Or of that painfully PC couple from Park Slope who carry their kids marsupial-style and make monthly donations to NPR. Or of earnest Greenpeace activists denouncing big corporations for killing polar bears and claiming that “The Science” shows we’re all doomed—Greens always use the definite article in relation to science.

Those views are so 1970s. Or at best 1980s. Environmentalism may still have a somewhat edgy, down-at-heel public image, but going green has become big business, and there are buckets of cash to be made from “saving the planet.” In fact, we are witnessing the emergence of a Green-Industrial Complex—an alliance between national governments, enormous corporations, and powerful individuals that uses the politics of fear to procure public money.

This new axis discourages healthy debate (accusing those who question it of being “climate-change deniers”); thwarts individual initiative (treating saving the planet as something that can only be done by central bankrollers); and helps to keep the Third World in poverty (encouraging it to remain “carbon-lite” in order to offset the “carbon heaviness” of the West). It’s time to toss an intellectual hand grenade into this network.

For a snapshot of the federal and business interests intertwined in the rise of green capitalism, consider the best-known environmentalist, Al Gore, direc-

tor of the film that has informed so many people’s views on the future of our planet, “An Inconvenient Truth.” To many, especially those still convinced that he was robbed of the 2000 presidential election, Gore is simply a super-committed individual determined to make the planet a better place. But there is far more to him. Gore is getting rich from environmentalism, not just by being paid a whopping \$175,000 per speech but by using political pressure to force government policy in a direction that benefits his business interests.

Gore is founder and chairman of the Alliance for Climate Protection, an outfit that seeks to “persuade people of the importance, urgency and feasibility of adopting and implementing effective and comprehensive solutions for the climate crisis.” It has launched a \$300 million advertising campaign to coax Americans to embrace the carbon-lite lifestyle and to put pressure on their political leaders to lower national carbon emissions.

But Gore is also chairman of a green investment firm called Generation Investment Management, which is a member of the Copenhagen Climate Council, an international collaboration of businesses and science bodies that promotes climate-change mitigation strategies and invests in companies that are environmentally friendly—including firms that produce renewable energy and low-carbon technology. So Gore uses one of his multimillion-dollar organizations—the Alliance for Climate Protection—to put pressure on government to promote the low-carbon

lifestyle, which furnishes one of his other multimillion-dollar organizations—General Investment Management—with booming business.

Gore is also at the forefront of a very vocal effort to encourage the Obama administration to put a price on carbon. That is, to follow in Europe’s footsteps by creating a carbon-trading scheme whereby the wasteful byproduct of everyday manufacturing would be priced. Only those who pay for the “right” to emit carbon would be allowed to do so. When this was first introduced in Europe in 2005 under the European Union Emissions Trading Scheme, a “pass” cost 30 euros per ton of CO₂. When you consider that a large coal-fired power station can produce 20 million tons of CO₂ per year, you see how the carbon levy works as a Big Government tax.

Gore and other members of the Copenhagen Climate Council, including the world’s largest producer of wind turbines, Vestas, present their demands for carbon-trading schemes as altruistic efforts to clean up the planet. In truth, these green-leaning profit-making machines stand to gain significantly if the activities of their less green competitors are hampered by government demands.

Gore’s activities provide only a glimpse into this new collusion between the green lobby, business interests, scientific research, and government policy. So speedily has this network come together that according to one critic of the politics of environmentalism—Bjørn

Lomborg, author of *The Skeptical Environmentalist*—it is not going too far to liken the new Green-Industrial Complex to the Military-Industrial Complex that President Dwight Eisenhower warned of in the 1950s. “[T]he potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist,” said Eisenhower, referring to the close relationship between weapons-makers, military researchers, and the U.S. military itself. He said of the resulting complex: “[T]here is a recurring temptation to feel that some spectacular and costly action could become the miraculous solution to all current difficulties.” This is also the core belief of the Green-Industrial Complex, that collection of green activists, scientific researchers, and federal officials. It believes that government investment in narrow green concerns—“green jobs,” “a green New Deal,” “carbon trading”—is the simple and spectacular answer not only to the recession but to the future of capitalist society itself.

The Obama administration sees “green jobs” as a route out of the recession. On the campaign trail, Obama spoke of a “green revolution” in which his administration would spend \$150 billion to boost America’s energy efficiency and in the process create 5 million jobs. These “green-collar workers” would install insulation to make homes more energy efficient, build wind turbines and greener buildings, and improve the electrical grid.

So now the race is on among green-leaning businesses to snap up the new government contracts—and among not-so-green businesses to improve their Green-Industrial credentials in the hope of reaping government cash. This despite the fact that international evidence suggests that the attempt to create green jobs will hamper economic recovery.

Obama cited Spain as a country where the focused creation of green jobs has improved economic matters. In

fact, according to a study by Gabriel Calzada, a professor of economics at Juan Carlos University in Madrid, for every green job created by the Spanish government in recent years, an average of 2.2 other jobs were destroyed to make way for it. Furthermore, green jobs tend not to be permanent: in Spain, only 1 in 10 green jobs exists for a significant period of time. “Spain’s experience cited by Obama reveals that the U.S. should expect a loss of about nine jobs for every four [green jobs] created,” said Calzada. He warned that his study demonstrates how the narrow focus on green jobs has “clearly hindered Spain’s way out of the economic crisis, even while U.S. politicians insist that rushing into such a scheme will ease their own emergence from the turmoil.”

In the UK, the Green-Industrial Complex is in full swing, seeing in the recession an opportunity to tighten its grip on public money. Activists have used their political clout and scientific research, much of it derived from studies that underpin the powerful business-science alliance of the Copenhagen Climate Council, to pressure the government to adopt a Green New Deal. The government has been keen to accommodate them. Prime Minister Gordon Brown announced in April, to much fanfare and nods of approval from the Obama administration, that he would create 400,000 green jobs and a “low-carbon economy.”

Yet as in Spain, Brown’s figures do not add up and actually reveal the deluded nature of the Green-Industrial Complex’s conviction—mirroring that of its military precursor—that “spectacular and costly action could become the miraculous solution to all current difficulties.” The Brown government imagines that by 2015, it will have created 39,600 new jobs in geothermal energy, 74,900 in the development of alternative fuels, 25,300 in solar power, and 69,300 in the construc-

tion of wind turbines. What this overlooks—fatally—is that as a result of Britain’s debilitating crisis of credit, the renewables industry, in which tens of thousands of new jobs are apparently going to be created in the next six years, is in a dire, if not collapsing state. Five of Britain’s biggest wind-energy projects have been abandoned or put on hold indefinitely, and British Petroleum recently cut 620 jobs in its solar-energy division because it wasn’t profitable. And we’re expected to believe that thousands more people will be employed in wind and solar power by 2015? As author Christopher Booker argues, Brown’s “green revolution” is “babyish make-believe.”

The Spanish and British experiences—fantasy figures; more jobs lost than created; “green-collar workers” on short, unpredictable contracts—suggest that Obama should not so enthusiastically sign up for the creation of a post-recession America informed by the politics and prejudices of the Green-Industrial Complex. But then, much of the to-ing and fro-ing over the allocation of public money, the vying for influence in a new green America, is not about taking practical measures to combat hardship and generate wealth. It is a political campaign designed to reinvigorate American society, and contemporary capitalism itself, with a new sense of purpose and values.

For Obama, it is the public impact of terms like “green jobs” and “green economy,” and the ability of such new terms to force corporations to compete in a new way, that is really key. His embrace of the Green-Industrial Complex is not about affecting real change, far less about restructuring the economy in a way that might make it more productive. Rather, it is about instituting a new political outlook, one in which government intervention on the side of science-exploiting, globally-conscious cor-

porations becomes the solution to contemporary problems. It is an outlook that both evades responsibility for overhauling the economy in a meaningful way and demotes individual initiative in favor of this burgeoning business/science/government alliance.

Indeed, green activists now talk openly about the recession being a “good thing.” Not only will it lead to less “destructive” human activity because people will be so financially restricted they won’t be able to consume and pollute in a wanton fashion, it will also elevate the policies of the Green-Industrial Complex to the center stage of public debate. A leading European scientist whose views inform the Copenhagen Climate Council recently said, “It’s a cruel thing to say ... but if we are looking at a slowdown in the economy, there will be less fossil fuels burning, so for the climate it could be an advantage.” This captures both the Complex’s cavalier attitude toward individual hardship and its disdain for anything other than Big Government/Big Business solutions. This is about creating a new mission for the elite while enforcing a culture of low horizons, if not outright fear-induced paralysis, among the “little people.”

Far from offering salvation from our economic difficulties, the Green-Industrial Complex actually played a role in bringing on the downturn and damaging important public institutions. It’s worth remembering that the company whose collapse precipitated the credit crunch—Lehman Brothers—enthusiastically embraced the idea of “carbon trading,” or “carbon cap and trade” as it is sometimes known, that is now held up by green campaigners as a liberal, if not revolutionary, approach. In its 2007 report *The Business of Climate Change: Challenges and Opportunities*, Lehman expressed hope that it might become a “prime brokerage for [carbon] emissions permits”—meaning it aspired to

make money not only from speculating in mortgages but also from trading in thin air.

Lehman was inspired by European carbon-trading schemes, the kind that many want Obama to introduce in America and the UN or the World Bank to enforce on a global scale. Under the plan first proposed in the Kyoto Protocol of 1997 and introduced in Europe in the early and mid-2000s, the European Union and UN allocate to industry legal titles to emit a certain amount of CO₂. Because the titles are transferable, and because large numbers were allocated to large corporations when the licenses were first introduced, there arose a market in carbon-trading. Powerful businesses were able to sell their CO₂ permits to smaller companies that needed to emit a certain amount of CO₂. This created the bizarre, but apparently environmentalist, situation in which major corporations with extra CO₂ titles were able to charge smaller organizations for the “right” to emit carbon.

In the UK, the University of Manchester, like so many other educational institutions, public buildings, and small businesses, had to pay up. It forked over \$92,500 for CO₂ permits—and when the carbon-trading market hit the recession and the value of CO₂ permits fell, the university would be doing well, said one report, “if it managed to get \$1,000 for the lot of them.” The Green-Industrial Complex’s transformation of CO₂ into a tradeable commodity actually empowered large corporations and led to new forms of risky speculation.

Now, as well as demanding that Obama do something similar in the U.S., there are calls for an international carbon-trading regime. The World Bank has proposed that it broker “carbon rights” between the developed and developing world. This would recreate, in global dimensions, the restrictions on small-scale initiative and economic

development that have already occurred in Europe. In the informal world of “carbon offsetting,” wealthy individuals in the West currently pay large sums to charities that fund “eco-friendly” farming and industry in the developing world. They can continue living carbon-heavy lives because “over there” some peasant is living a carbon-lite life. It was recently revealed that Prince Charles and David Cameron, leader of Britain’s Conservative Party, were making donations to a charity that encourages Indian farmers to use foot pumps rather than machinery to draw water for their crops. In short, guilt-ridden rich people are paying poor people to stay poor. Formalizing such an unequal relationship with international brokerage of carbon-emission rights would be a disaster—eco-slavery, as it were.

Far from ushering in a brighter future, the Green-Industrial Complex’s activities hinder economic experimentation, individual initiative, and human aspiration. In problematizing the emission of CO₂ to such an extent that one has to pay for the privilege, the Complex implicitly denigrates production, since all forms of modern manufacturing emit CO₂. In racing to access green-allocated public money, it treats authorities as the solution to every problem. And how does it press the case for remaking society and the economy in its own image? Through the politics of fear, with science-tinged reports about imminent disaster if we do not take its advice.

This is a recipe for economic stagnation rather than recovery and for a new form of politics dominated by an elite green clique and closed off to us mere mortals. ■

Brendan O’Neill is editor of spiked (www.spiked-online.com) and author of Can I Recycle My Granny and 39 Other Eco-Dilemmas, a satire on environmentalism.

Tehran's Tiananmen

THE OBAMA POLICY of extending an open hand to Iran is working and ought not be abandoned because of the grim events in Tehran.

For the Iranian theocracy has just administered a body blow to its legitimacy in the eyes of the Iranian people and the world. Before the election, the regime could credibly posture as defender of the nation, defiant in the face of the threats from Israel, faithful to the cause of the Palestinians, standing firm for Iran's right to enrich uranium for peaceful nuclear power.

Now the regime, including the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, is under a cloud of suspicion that they are but another gang of corrupt politicians who brazenly stole a presidential election to keep themselves and their clerical cronies in power.

What should we do now? Wait for the dust to settle. No U.S. denunciation of what took place in Iran is as credible as the reports and pictures coming out of Iran. Those reports, those pictures are stripping the mullahs of the only asset they seemed to possess—that, even if fanatics, they were principled, honest men.

Like Hamas, it was said, at least they were not corrupt, at least they did not cheat the people.

No more. Today, in the streets of Tehran and other cities, they call to mind "Comrade Bob" Mugabe in Harare, Zimbabwe.

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad will never recapture that revolutionary purity he once seemed to possess as the man of the people who was elected president in the upset of 2005. Today, he appears, as the *New York Times* puts it, "as the shrewd and ruthless front man for a clerical military and political elite that is

more unified and emboldened than at any time since the 1979 revolution."

There are other reasons Obama should not heed the war hawks now squawking for confrontation. When your adversary is making a fool of himself, get out of the way. That is a rule of politics Lyndon Johnson once put into the most pungent of terms. U.S. fulminations will change nothing in Tehran. But they would enable the regime to divert attention to U.S. meddling in Iran's affairs and portray the candidate robbed in this election, Mir-Hossein Mousavi, as a poodle of the Americans.

When Nikita Khrushchev bathed the Hungarian revolution in blood, Ike did not break relations. Khrushchev was at Camp David three years later. When Deng Xiaoping and Co. ordered the tanks into Tiananmen Square, George H.W. Bush did not break relations. When Moscow ordered Warsaw to crush Solidarity, Ronald Reagan did not let that act of repression deter him from seeking direct talks to reduce nuclear weapons.

Again, let us wait for the dust to settle. By now, even Ahmadinejad and Ali Khamenei must recognize that the Iranian revolution is losing the Iranian people. This is the third of four straight presidential elections where the turnout has been huge and the candidate who promised reconciliation with the West and an easing of social strictures won a landslide among the student young, the future leaders of Iran.

Which way the regime will now go is difficult to predict. After Tiananmen Square, the Chinese rulers who ordered in the tanks sought to reconnect with the disillusioned young by opening up to the West and building a neo-capitalist economy.

Iran, in economic straits with U.S.

sanctions biting, its oil and gas reserves dwindling, could try the same route: seize the opposition's best issues by seeking accommodation with America. More likely, the regime, backed by the hard-line military, will try to reconnect with the masses and regain its reputation as defender of Islam and the nation, by defying the Americans, denouncing Israel, and pressing forward with Iran's nuclear program.

The dilemma for America is that the theocracy defines itself and grounds its claim to leadership through its unyielding resistance to the Great Satan—the United States—and to Israel.

Nevertheless, Obama, with his outstretched hand, his message to Iran on its national day, his admission that the United States had a hand in the 1953 coup in Tehran, his assurances that we recognize Iran's right to nuclear power, has succeeded. He stripped the ayatollah and Ahmadinejad of their clinching argument—that America is out to destroy Iran and they are indispensable to the Islamic Republic's defense.

With the mask of patriotism and the legacy of true revolution lost through this election fraud, Iran's regime stands exposed as just another dictatorship covering up a refusal to yield power and privilege with a pack of lies about protecting the nation.

The election not only revealed the character of the Iranian regime. It also revealed that time is on our side. If the people of Iran can defy this regime, it is no threat to us.

As with the other revolutionary and totalitarian regimes, from the Soviet Union of Lenin and Stalin, to the People's Republic of Mao, to the revolutionary Cuba of Fidel, America outlasts them all. And the ayatollahs, too. ■

Tortured Truth

What Cheney learned from Stalin

By Andrew Brown

WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT that Dick Cheney was a follower of French fashion? When he defends the routine use of torture as a means of warfare, however, theirs is the most recent example. The French, in the Algerian War, were the last Western army to systematize the use of torture on detainees. Alistair Horne describes the methods and consequences wonderfully well in his history *A Savage War of Peace*. They don't encourage imitation.

In fact, the lesson of the Algerian War, and of the Bush government's experiment with the same sort of policies, is one that should be obvious and gratifying to any conservative: the traditional absolute ban on judicial torture is wiser than we can know.

Of course, in the hubris of the Bush and Cheney years, the U.S. was free of all the bonds of history. It seemed that the French lost Algeria because they were, well, French: torture helped them win the battle of Algiers, and if they had only been prepared to tough it out, it might have won them the war. Something like this lurks behind almost all the "pragmatic" defenses of torture—something in the spirit of the Stalinist poet Berthold Brecht's great cry: "Sink down into the slime, embrace the butcher, but change the world—it needs it."

The terrible lessons of all the 20th century's bloody utopias, however, is that Brecht was wrong. We can always sink into the slime and embrace the butchers, but at the end of our embrace, the world has not changed at all, except to have lost a little more of our hard-won civilization.

None of this is to say that torture has no effects at all or that it's good for nothing. The reason we need to be absolutist about torture is not that it is useless but that it uses and eventually consumes the torturers. It does not deliver what it promises to hygienically minded policy wonks who think they want the truth. It delivers only what torturers really want, whether they know it or not, which is the agony of their enemies.

Nowadays, of course, we pretend not to enjoy what we are doing, or what is done in our name, although I do not believe that anyone can long continue as a torturer without learning to enjoy it. Instead, we justify its use by the claim that it delivers confessions. "It worked," as Dick Cheney recently told Fox News.

Here is a point that even an absolutist opponent of torture must concede. Of course torture delivers confessions. And even an absolutist will concede that some of these confessions will in fact be true. The problem is that there is no way for the interrogator to know which are which, and all the history of torture suggests that the false admissions will vastly outnumber the true.

No one but a psychopath sets out to torture in a spirit of disinterested inquiry. Normally torturers don't want to know everything the victim knows or thinks but one particular thing that they believe is being concealed. And the overriding concern of the victim soon becomes to find what the torturer wants and deliver it, whether or not this is a delusion.

It often happens that what the torturer wants does not exist. The classic exam-

ple is the witchcraft trials, in which thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands of people confessed to intercourse with the devil and other practices even more unlikely. It's worth noting that many of them did so without the use of the rack or of burning irons or other devices beloved by the Inquisition. The Scottish Calvinist witch-hunters used nothing more than cold, hunger, and denial of sleep to extract confessions, and in Salem not even that was necessary.

You may say that the world has moved on and that if we use advanced methods, we get better results. Dick Cheney believes in torture, but he doesn't believe in witches. All right. Let us pretend that the great witch craze offers nothing in the way of helpful lessons about torture today. Look instead at the 20th-century regime that used torture in the largest possible scale: Stalin's Russia.

One of the first disconcerting things to discover when you inquire into the interrogation habits of the KGB is that their practices weren't defined as torture at all. This isn't in fact surprising when you consider the history of the Bush administration's enhanced techniques: they were taken from Army interrogation schools, which were concerned with preparing people for Chinese and North Korean methods of interrogation, which had in turn been learned from the KGB, or the NKVD as it then was. So there is a very direct line of transmission between the torturers who once threatened the free world and those who now claim to defend it.

But as I say, at all times and places

there have been people who say that advanced techniques of interrogation are not torture. They don't involve the rack. There are no red-hot pincers. The dogs are very seldom allowed to bite their victims, and hardly anyone is ever beaten all the way to death.

And if you read the great chroniclers of Stalin's terror—Robert Conquest, Alexandr Solzhenitsyn—they freely concede that the most widespread and advanced techniques of interrogation were not defined as torture at all. With the single exception of waterboarding—apparently too advanced for Stalin's taste—they were the same, simple techniques as were institutionalized under Bush and Cheney.

In particular, sleep deprivation and prolonged standing, or even sitting in one position, amount soon enough to

enemies being terrorized, and some, like Nikolai Yezhov, the discarded head of the NKVD, were monsters responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people. So it is an extraordinary achievement of Stalin's regime to have shot them for some of the very few crimes of which they were almost certainly innocent.

Almost all of them confessed that they had been working, for decades, for British intelligence. Many confessed to involvement in plots to assassinate Comrade Stalin (on British orders, of course). In fact, it emerged during the course of the purges that every single member of the party's central committee in 1929, except for Comrade Stalin, was taking directions from British or Polish intelligence, from Trotsky, or from some combination of these—

what we need to hear.

So one simple question arises: Do we have any good reason to believe that anything he said was true? It is clear that Khalid's confession has exactly the same evidentiary value as the confession of Yezhov and Beria, successive heads of the KGB, that they plotted to assassinate Comrade Stalin on the orders of British intelligence. The evidence that Khalid tried to blow up the Empire State Building, Heathrow Airport, Canary Wharf, Big Ben, and the Panama Canal is exactly as good as the evidence that Trotskyist saboteurs and wreckers were responsible for the failings of the Soviet economy in the 1930s. In all these cases, we have the confessions of the men responsible. In all these cases, they have been extracted by torture.

The argument against torture, then, is both moral and prudential. The prudential flaws arise from the moral ones. Torture does not reliably deliver the truth because we, the torturers, are flawed and sinful creatures who do not greatly want the truth and certainly don't want it more than reassurance. This is not, by the way, an argument for outsourcing it to computers, although there is a strain of modern utopianism that would say that if people are flawed, we must replace them with machines that aren't.

The kind of absolutism that this problem calls for is a clear-sighted recognition of our own flaws and limitations, which leads to an absolute ban on the practice under any circumstances. Torture is a means of forcing people to lie to us, under circumstances that compel us to believe them, because otherwise we would have to face the truth about ourselves. ■

Andrew Brown writes for the Guardian and is author of several books. His latest, Fishing in Utopia: Sweden & The Future That Disappeared, won this year's Orwell Prize.

TORTURE DOES NOT RELIABLY DELIVER THE TRUTH BECAUSE WE, THE TORTURERS, ARE FLAWED AND SINFUL CREATURES WHO DO NOT GREATLY WANT THE TRUTH.

torture as those who have suffered will testify. Of course, after a while they will also say anything to stop the pain. Solzhenitsyn argued that we should pity those who gave in under such methods and said more than they should; we should not presume to judge them, for what they suffered could well have been unendurable.

It may be objected that the women and girls hanged as witches in Massachusetts were innocent, whereas men like Khalid Sheikh Mohammed were thoroughly evil and had in fact done terrible things. But even evil people lie under torture as readily as they tell the truth. Consider the evidence against other genuinely evil people—the old Bolsheviks whom Stalin had murdered after the show trials of the '30s. None of those men were innocents. All had approved the terror when it was their

except the ones lucky enough to die before the trials started.

Many people believed this story at the time, among them the American ambassador to Moscow. They had good evidence: the evidence of the confessions extracted by Comrade Stalin's advanced techniques of interrogation.

Two years ago, the Bush government released the confessions of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed in which—after prolonged interrogation using techniques even more advanced than those of the KGB—he admitted that he plotted to assassinate Pope John Paul II, Bill Clinton, Jimmy Carter, and Pervez Musharraf. Everyone now agrees that he was tortured. In fact, he is exactly the sort of person whom the advocates of torture have in mind as someone who should be waterboarded, beaten, frozen, deprived of sleep, and then waterboarded again until he tells us

Interrogation Enhanced

The American officer who cracked the Zarqawi network did so without stooping to the terrorists' level.

By Matthew Alexander

THERE'S A JOKE interrogators tell: "What's the difference between a 'gator and a used car salesman?" Answer: "A 'gator has to abide by the Geneva Conventions."

Interrogators don't hawk Chevys; we sell hope to prisoners and find targets for shooters. My group arrived in Iraq in March 2006, at a time when our country was searching for a better way to conduct sales.

After 9/11, military interrogators focused on two techniques: fear and control. The Army trained their 'gators to confront and dominate prisoners. This led down the disastrous path to the Abu Ghraib scandal. At Guantanamo Bay, the early interrogators not only abused the detainees, they tried to belittle their religious beliefs. These approaches rarely yielded results, and our disgrace was detailed on every news broadcast and front page from New York to Islamabad.

My group was among the first to bring a new approach. Respect, rapport, hope, cunning, and deception are our tools. The old ones—fear and control—are as obsolete as the buggy whip. Unfortunately, not everyone embraces change.

The C-130 sweeps low over mile after mile of nothingness. Sand dunes, flats, red-orange horizon. The landscape is as desolate as it was in biblical times. Two millennia later, little has changed but the methods with which we kill. We cross

the Tigris, and I see one of Saddam's former palaces. We're getting close. Our destination is a base north of Baghdad.

The pilots paint the big transport onto the runway then swing into a parking space. The ramp behind us drops. "Welcome to the war," somebody says behind me.

When I went home in June 2003, I thought the war was over—mission accomplished—but it had just changed form. We've arrived in Iraq near the war's third anniversary. The Army, severely stretched, has reached out to the other services for help. Our group was handpicked by the Air Force to assist our brothers in green. We still don't know our mission, but we've been told it has the highest priority.

One of us is a civilian agent. The rest are military. I'm the only officer. In the weeks to come, we'll try to prove our new techniques work, but if we cross the wrong people, we'll be sent home.

My agents are called one by one into the commander's office for evaluation. Finally, a tall Asian-American man steps into the briefing room. "Matthew?"

I step forward. He regards me and says, "I'm David, the senior interrogator." He leads me to the commander's office. There's one free chair, a plush leather number. The interrogation unit commander, Roger, sits behind a desk. Everyone else is in ergonomic hell.

Roger explains that this is an informal board designed to make sure we'll be a good fit for the interrogation unit.

"David, do you want to go first?"

He has dark rings under both eyes. "What countries border Iraq?"

"Turkey to the north. Iran to the east, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to the south, Jordan and Syria to the west."

"What's the difference between Shia and Sunni?"

"It goes back to the schism in Islam caused by the death of Muhammad. Sunnis believe that the legitimate successor was Muhammad's closest disciple, Abu Bakr. Shia believe the succession should have been passed through his cousin Ali. The Shia lost. When Abu Bakr died, the Shia tried to recapture the leadership of Islam, but Ali's son Hussein was murdered outside Karbala, and the Sunnis have held the balance of power ever since."

Roger takes the stage. "If you saw somebody threatening a detainee, what would you do?"

"I'd make him stop."

"How do you feel about waterboarding or other enhanced interrogation techniques?"

Ah, the heart of the matter. Since Abu Ghraib everyone in the interrogation business has been on edge. Careers are at stake. Jail time is at stake.

"I'm opposed to enhanced techniques. They do more harm than good. Besides, we don't need them."

"What do you mean?"

"A good interrogator can get the information he needs in more subtle ways," I reply.

"Okay," Roger says dismissively. "Wait outside. We need to talk."

Ten minutes later I'm called back in. Roger smiles and shakes my hand. "In three weeks, we're going to need a new senior interrogator. You're it."

I follow David and Roger down to a briefing room. The interrogators and analysts take turns discussing the detainees as their faces appear on a large screen. Toward the end of the meeting, a colonel walks into the room.

Someone says, "That's the task force commander. Veteran of the Battle of Mogadishu, which 'Black Hawk Down' is based on." He's charismatic enough to have played himself in the movie.

"For you new guys, here's the run-down. Last month al-Qaeda blew up the Golden Dome Mosque in Samarra. This was a Shia shrine. To a Catholic, it'd be like blowing up the Sistine Chapel."

He lets that sink in. "The destruction of the Golden Dome Mosque has prompted a surge in sectarian violence. Al-Qaeda's leader here in Iraq, Abu Musab al Zarqawi, has made it his mission to spark a civil war between Sunni and Shia. From now on, you have only one objective: find Zarqawi and kill him before he can do that."

We've just joined the hunt for the most wanted man in Iraq.

The first three days are a whirlwind, and the learning curve is steep. Zarqawi started life as a thug who served time in a Jordanian jail for sexual assault. In prison, he embraced fundamentalism. Once released, he traveled to Afghanistan, where he joined bin Laden in the *jihad* against the Soviet Union.

When the war ended, he returned to Jordan and planned terrorist acts to bring down the government. When the authorities closed in, he fled to Afghanistan and rejoined bin Laden, though his relationship with the master

terrorist seems to have been tenuous. Osama reportedly thought Zarqawi little more than an uneducated stooge.

Before the American invasion, Zarqawi moved to northern Iraq to develop a terrorist network called Tawhid al Jihad. He established ties all over Sunni Iraq and began launching attacks in the summer of 2003.

His group became the masters of suicide bombings. Instead of targeting Americans, Zarqawi's true believers went after Shia civilians. He wanted to exploit the centuries-old division between Shia and Sunni to create civil war. Such a conflict would ensnare the United States in a protracted conflict. His plan worked brilliantly.

"ABU ALI, WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF I GAVE YOU A KNIFE?"

"I WOULD SLIT YOUR THROAT AND WATCH YOU DIE."

HIS GAZE ON ME IS EVEN.

His successes gained him the respect of bin Laden, and he became al-Qaeda's chief for Mesopotamia. If we could find Zarqawi and capture or kill him, our intelligence community believed we could stop the suicide bombings. Stop the suicide bombings, and the Sunni-on-Shia civil war would end.

The interrogation booth is a six-by-six room with plywood walls, plastic chairs, and a table. Today, my fourth day in the country, my partner is Bobby, a corn-fed boy from Nebraska.

I sit beside him in front of a human skeleton. Abu Ali, a Sunni. Bitterness leeches out of him. Our interpreter, Hadir, stands in the far corner. The 'terp looks reluctant to speak.

Bobby glances at Hadir, though we're supposed to maintain eye contact with our detainee. "What did he say?"

Hadir frowns. Then, in a perfect mimic of Abu Ali's tone, says, "You came to my country. You Americans ruined our lives and now you want to help me?"

Bobby nods, "Yes, we can help you. Don't you want to see your family again? Help us help you."

He does not reply. Bobby had warned me beforehand that Abu Ali is a hard case. He hasn't given anything up, despite numerous interrogations.

"Abu Ali, what would you do if I gave you a knife?"

"I would slit your throat and watch you die." His gaze on me is even.

"Just because I'm an American? Even though I mean you no harm?"

Hadir translates, "You created this hell we are living in."

Bobby changes the subject. "Abu Ali, why don't you tell Matthew why you joined al-Qaeda?"

"It goes back to when you Americans first invaded," he begins. "Sunni and Shia lived as neighbors. My mother is Shia. She converted to Sunni when she married my father. There was harmony. But you Americans removed Saddam. We lost our protection. America doesn't care about Sunnis. You let the Shia militias kill my people."

"What do they want?"

"Power. Dominance. I owned a clothing store. One day, I came to the store and found a note. 'Pack your things and leave. You have 48 hours or you will die.' The bottom of the page had the symbol of the Badr Corps."

He lets that sink in. We stare at each other.

"What did you do?"

"I did what I had to do to save my family. I lost my shop. My livelihood. I returned to the mosque of my childhood. It was there I met fellow Sunni willing to fight for our people."

I lean forward in my chair. I try to act earnest and sympathetic. "Abu Ali, why al-Qaeda? Why not one of the Sunni groups like Ansar al Sunna?"

"You Americans had wiped them out. Without al-Qaeda, we had nothing."

"So do you believe in al-Qaeda's goals?"

Abu Ali sizes me up. "No, I am Iraqi. I only want back my home."

Bobby cuts in, "Tell Matthew what you did for al-Qaeda."

The stare-down goes on for 30 seconds. "I recruited," he says at last.

The next morning a guard brings Abu Ali back to our interrogation booth. He glares at us. Bobby gets right to the point, "You have a son."

He growls, "Eleven years old. He is just a boy."

"Abu Ali, think about your son. What will happen to him in this Iraq?" Abu Ali's eyes burn with hatred. We've hit a nerve. I press harder.

"Your neighborhood has been ruined. Your life has been ruined. Is that what you want for your son?"

He sinks within himself.

"Look, Abu Ali, we Americans made plenty of mistakes. We didn't realize that the Shia would form militias. We didn't know they would assassinate Sunni."

His eyes spear me. At least I have his attention.

"But that doesn't mean we can't work together to fix it." Silence.

"Who else will help you? The Syrians? The Saudis? The Jordanians? None of them are going to come to your rescue."

"You caused this," he barks. Good, we've got him emotional.

"You've got nobody else. Who is going to help? Al-Qaeda?"

"Al-Qaeda cannot help us." The words seem to slip out inadvertently.

Bobby jumps in, "Abu Ali, do you want your son to grow up in this cycle of violence?"

Defiance flares in him. "I would be happy to see my son die. He would die a martyr."

"Bulls--t!" Bobby yells, throwing his last ace. Abu Ali's head drops ever so slightly.

"I just want things back the way they were," he says in a gentle voice.

We've gotten him.

The next morning I arrive at the 'gator pit early. The night-shift interrogators are typing their reports. I spot my team member Ann.

"How'd it go last night?" I ask.

"Frustrating. I've got this operations guy I know has to be important, but I can't get through to him. He's resigned to his fate."

"*Inshallah.*"

"Exactly."

"Have you shown him any sympathy?"

LENNY GUFFAWS AGAIN. **"CONTROL 101 IS THE FIRST LESSON IN INTERROGATION. THEY'RE THE ENEMY FOR CHRIST'S SAKE. SYMPATHY FOR A HAJI. RIGHT."**

Ann shakes her head.

Lenny, a night-shift 'gator from New York City, guffaws. "F--king muj. Just show him who's boss." Lenny's an old-schooler, a veteran 'gator who got pulled out of Guantanamo.

"What do you mean?" I ask him.

"These muj won't give you nothin' unless you take charge. Take the muj I've got right now. He'll come around once he gets it through his thick skill that he's going to hang."

I'm annoyed. One thing we were taught back at Fort Huachuca was never to use derogatory terms to describe detainees. Dehumanizing them is the first step down the slippery slope to torture. It also exposes Lenny's ignorance; not all of the detainees here are muja-hadeen.

I turn back to Ann. "Your detainee is Sunni, right? Most of them have been terrorized by Shia militias. If you show some sympathy towards him because of this, maybe he'll open up."

Lenny guffaws again. "Control 101 is the first lesson in interrogation. They're the enemy for Christ's sake. Sympathy for a haji. Right."

There's an awkward silence until Bobby bounds up to me. "You gotta check something out," he says. "The Special Forces captured this last night. Unbelievable."

I follow Bobby to his computer. The video opens with a bound man on his knees in a field. Two Sunni insurgents stand on either side in black masks. Their prisoner, who can't be more than 24, looks like an academic. I want to scream for him to run.

One of the insurgents utters a few words as he unsheathes a long, wicked

knife. He stands behind the prisoner, grabs a mass of his hair, jerks his head upward, and cuts his throat. The dirt turns crimson. But the insurgent isn't done. He brings the knife down again. The dying man gurgles. The insurgent saws, tugs, and the head tears partly away from the ruined neck. The second insurgent walks over and takes the knife. He cuts the head free and holds up his trophy, his eyes triumphant.

The file ends.

I have no words.

In my Air Force career, I've been to almost every continent and seen my share of trauma and tragedy. There are things that never leave a man. I try to rely on logic and intelligence when confronted by overwhelming emotion. It is how I got by as a criminal investigator. But nothing in my career has prepared me for this.

Treat them with sympathy.

He hacked the helpless academic's head off with a knife.

Treat them with respect and be sensitive to their cultural traditions.

I don't want to become Lenny. I don't want to dehumanize my enemy. Yet what I have just watched seems like pure evil. If I don't make a conscious choice about how to respond, my emotions will take over. Torture and cruelty are their tools. I won't go down that path. Contempt won't get our prisoners talking. Yet after what I've seen today, it will take an Oscar-caliber performance to display respect for my enemy.

The Group of Five seems to be our only link to Zarqawi. How many times have we captured so many senior leaders in one place? Officially, Abu Haydar is just the cameraman. Yet everything in me screams that he's the link—the guy we need to get talking.

Lenny has tried to control him, and Abu Haydar has played him in every interrogation I've watched. It is clear that he has no respect for him. In return, Lenny treats him with contempt. Maybe our new methods won't work on Abu Haydar. The trouble is, we haven't been able to try them. I look at the clock. Thirteen hundred. He gets transferred in 10 hours.

He's committed. He's cunning and highly intelligent. He has all the hallmark behaviors of a leader. I head for the cellblock.

"Remove your mask, please."

Abu Haydar pulls the black mask off and regards me quizzically.

"Hello," I say with measured cordiality, "I am Dr. Matthew."

"Hello, Dr. Matthew. I am pleased to meet you." His lips are tightly drawn. He's already sizing me up. The game is on.

I DON'T WANT TO **DEHUMANIZE MY ENEMY**. YET WHAT I HAVE JUST WATCHED SEEMS LIKE **PURE EVIL**.

"No," I say, letting excitement creep into my voice, "the pleasure is all mine. I've wanted to talk to you for a long time."

His eyes widen and crawl across my face, studying everything.

"I am fascinated by your education in Islam."

"What did you say?" Abu Haydar replies, his words tightly wound. I know he heard me. Neither of us blinks.

"I have studied Islam for 14 years." He lingers over each word, ensuring perfect pronunciation.

"I have studied Islam myself, but not for the same length of time as you," I marvel. I stroke his ego and wait to see how he responds.

"You have studied Islam?" he sounds respectful, but there's an undercurrent of disbelief. I pick up my copy of the Koran and hold it out to him. I see his poker face slip.

"Before I came to Iraq, I was stationed in Saudi Arabia. A colonel in the Saudi Air Force gave this to me. I loved to sit and talk with my Saudi friends..."

He cuts me off. "What did you talk about?"

He's trying to gain the initiative. Who is interrogating whom? I go with it. Let him get comfortable. Give up control for something in return.

"Are you a Muslim?"

"I don't think I am strong enough to be a Muslim."

He stops stroking his beard. "What do you mean?"

"Well, to be a true Muslim, you must surrender to Allah's will, correct?"

"That is correct."

"I don't think I could live up to that."

He laughs. "Well, no one is perfect."

I laugh as well. "Yes, we all make mistakes."

His eyes narrow. "Yes, we all make mistakes. But mercy demands forgiveness, right?" This smells like bait. I pretend not to notice and change the subject. "What sort of sports do you like?"

He seizes the initiative. "You know, Dr. Matthew, you are not like the others."

He's running an approach on me. I react with caution.

"They are ignorant."

The schoolhouse taught us never to damage the credibility of another interrogator with a detainee. I decide to avoid his gambit.

"Abu Haydar, I have a question for you."

The poker face returns. "Certainly."

"In 2003, the United States takes out Saddam. But after Saddam falls, we make many serious errors." He looks interested.

"Can't the Sunni see the war that is coming? Look at what we've done since 9/11. We invaded Afghanistan. We've got bases in Central Asia. We invaded Iraq. Turkey is our ally and we have bases there as well. Can't the Sunni see that we've positioned ourselves around Iran?"

"Yes," he says slowly, "we have discussed this."

"That's why I'm here. I'm on a special mission. I have been tasked with finding

Sunni leaders willing to fight with us against the Shia and Iran. We need capable leaders whom we can work with as equal allies. I think you are one. But before I can offer this to you, I have got to be able to trust you."

He remains still as a corpse.

"Here is what I need for me to trust you. I am thinking of a name. You know who I am thinking of. I need to hear you say his name."

I have no name in mind.

We sit in silence. Thirty seconds pass. He scrutinizes me and I don't move. Every muscle, every nerve must sell this long shot.

"Abu ... Ayyub ... al ... Masri."

Al Masri is Zarqawi's number two man.

I want to continue this, but I don't have that luxury. "Abu Haydar, I need to leave now. I absolutely must stop your transfer to Abu Ghraib."

"Yes, yes. Please do that." He rises and extends his hand. I am taken off guard. Iraqis don't shake hands. I take his hand. He clasps my wrist with his other hand. It is a handshake worthy of allies.

I race to the conference room. I am borderline euphoric. If we can properly exploit Abu Haydar, he can give us al Masri. Al Masri can give us Zarqawi.

Our operations officer, Randy, is titanium-tough and has devoted the last three years of his life to chasing Zarqawi.

"Slides," he calls. Abu Haydar's mug shot appears.

"He's on the chopper to Abu Ghraib," Randy says. "Next."

I interrupt, "Uh, the detainee provided valuable information today."

Randy freezes. I hear Lenny intake a sharp breath behind me.

"The detainee admitted that he met with Abu Ayyub al Masri four times in different safe houses around Yusufiyah."

Randy looks stunned. "Why is he talking now?" His eyes say *Why is he talking*

to you?

"Maybe because I showed him respect." I hear Lenny exhale explosively.

The meeting continues in subdued silence. When it ends, Randy looks at me from across the table. "Good f--king job." He doesn't wait for a reply; he just gets up and walks out the door.

Lenny turns his fury on me. "You just completely undermined a month's worth of work! You just blew every piece of control I had over him. F--K THIS!" he roars as he storms off.

I shrug. It doesn't matter. The path to Zarqawi leads through Abu Haydar.

We switch to the live feed. The blue car weaves through Baghdad traffic. Our Special Forces teams are on a hair trigger. The moment they get the location, the helicopters will be off. The driver continues outside the city limits, down a highway for almost 40 minutes. Finally, he turns onto a minor road and pulls up to a farmhouse.

The helicopters buzz our hangar as they fly overhead toward the most important target of the Iraq War. Their beating blades grow faint, then quiet.

Ten minutes pass. No sign of the helicopters. The 'gator pit's mood changes from expectant to anxious.

Suddenly, the screen grows dark. There's a collective gasp. A towering column of smoke and debris erupts.

My God.

Before the smoke can clear, another explosion tears through the remains. The feed ends. Finally, an officer walks in. "Ladies and gentlemen, we got him. Abu Musab al Zarqawi is dead."

The ocean looks sweet today, with perfect rollers that break 50 yards from shore. The sun-burnished beach stretches for miles. I am home, on my surfboard.

I've lived a nomadic, sometimes fierce existence in the service of my country. I

have rarely had a place to call my own, so I return to these shores after every deployment to find solace.

Everyone who returns from Iraq must carry personal demons. Mine have haunted me since the day Zarqawi died in our air strike.

Abu Haydar had pleaded to keep his friend Abu 'Abd al Rahman, Zarqawi's spiritual adviser, safe, but he died in the blast. When he heard, Abu Haydar's reaction was total emotional collapse.

Not long after that, Lenny was called into the commanding general's office and was given a Bronze Star.

The next day, as I walked through the pit, one of the other 'gators called me over. "Does this girl look like al Masri?" she asked. She held a photo of a dead child. Her crushed head lay amid the rubble of the house. I looked away. Two children had died in the bombing. I own a part of their deaths and will carry that guilt for the rest of my life.

The sun is low on the horizon, the water glittering gold. Killing Zarqawi dealt a blow to al-Qaeda in Iraq, but it didn't end the suicide bombings. The hydra lives. Al Masri took over and nothing changed in our compound but the target.

I find a sweet spot in the swells and start paddling. In a heartbeat, I'm on my feet, the board aligned below. It's a glorious moment full of translucent sunshine and the perfume of salt water.

I am free again. One day I will make sense of it all and feel whole. ■

Matthew Alexander spent 14 years in the U.S. Air Force and now serves in the U.S. Air Force Reserves. He has conducted more than 300 interrogations in Iraq and supervised more than 1,000. This essay is abridged from How to Break a Terrorist by Matthew Alexander with John R. Bruning. Copyright © 2008 by Matthew Alexander. Used by permission of Free Press, a Division of Simon & Schuster, Inc.

Health of the State

If I were a decent American conservative, rather than a psoriatic Scotch-Irish Catholic depressive, I would probably not take great pleasure in reading what British

writers had to say about American habits and customs. All the same, I am about to gatecrash the Great Obama Healthcare Debate, not least because I have recently survived surgery at a National Health Service hospital and may have some insights to share.

First, a bit of background. On the evening of Dec. 2, 1992, I was in the ballroom of the Capital Hilton in Washington, D.C. at the 25th anniversary dinner of the *American Spectator*, when all of a sudden my heart started to race and I began to pour with sweat.

Somehow I made it to the lobby, where I collapsed. A pretty girl from reception cradled my head in her lap and loosened my tie. Next thing I knew, two paramedics were strapping me to a stretcher and jogging me to an ambulance.

As we sped through the gleaming Washington night, one of the men, a Hispanic with a thick accent, asked me several times for my social security number. "Hey, Jose," said his companion after a while, "leave the guy alone. Can't you see he's an alien?"

They took me to George Washington Hospital. It was ER heaven. I was tested for every disease known to man and discharged at about 3 o'clock in the morning with a clean bill of health. (On the diagnosis sheet, they wrote that I had "fainted.")

At the hospital checkout, I asked the big woman in charge whether they sold cigarettes. "No, sir, we do not," she said. I sensed she was not going to be easy to charm. "That will be \$1,082.49, sir," she

said. I smiled. "Oh, *that*. I'll let you have my insurance details later."

"No, sir. We need a credit card now,"

"Look," I said, "a couple of years ago my boy was treated for a concussion in Albuquerque, at a rather better appointed hospital than this, and there was absolutely no question of my handing over money for the treatment. They took my insurance details and settled the bill with the insurance company."

"Sure, sir," she said. "That was Albuquerque. This is Washington. Here you pay." I knew when I was beaten, and handed over my plastic.

The treatment I received was worth every penny, and fortunately I had a million quid's worth of cover back at the Howard Johnson. The American healthcare system works, and works well, but not for everyone. That's why some of us aliens—especially those like me who have family in America—rather like the look of some of Barack Obama's proposals.

"Socialized medicine" might bring life expectancy in the U.S. up to Western European levels. But it might also turn Americans into vassals of a welfare state. No one knows. In Britain we have managed to live with socialized medicine since the war, and it is not doing as much harm as some right-wing American ideologues may suppose, or as much good as some American liberals like to hope.

Take my experience. Last month I had surgery, a hemorrhoidectomy, on the NHS. So far as I know, the "procedure" itself went well, but the rest of the day

didn't. Following the operation, I spent about seven hours in a recovery ward waiting to be seen by a doctor. None came.

Eventually I managed to speak to a junior doctor by telephone. I asked him the sorts of questions you might expect someone in my uncomfortable, delicate, unseemly, and humiliating position to ask. I am pretty sure the fellow did not know much more about this field of medicine than I do and that he was winging it.

I left the hospital with a plastic bag containing painkillers, a sickly laxative, some antibiotics, and the instruction to see my GP if there was an emergency.

That was it. I was on my own. From diagnosis to operation, my treatment had taken almost five months. I can't imagine that it would have taken much more than a fortnight if I'd used private medicine.

So: not a brilliant experience.

Whatever it's shortcomings, however, millions of Britons are grateful to the NHS, and with good reason. It kills people, of course, but what health system does not? And it acts as the enabling arms of the secular state, handing out condoms to any teenager smart enough to walk as far as the local medical center. But it looks after most of us from cradle to grave and does so pretty well.

Karl Rove will think the NHS socialist, but then he thought Saddam Hussein was a Nazi. In truth, the NHS is no more socialist than, for example, the New York Sanitation Department or the 82nd Airborne. All three are public services.

Here's the bottom line, though: if you want the best healthcare, just as if you want the best education, you have to pay for it. ■

Prague Autumn

The Czechs escaped Soviet domination only to face a new tyranny.

By Peter Hitchens

FOR MOST OF US, Prague is an idea before it is a city. Mention of the name calls up a series of monochrome images, most of them violent and distressing, boding little good for those involved. Imperial delegates are hurled from a high window into a dungheap and the Thirty Years War begins. Women weep as the German army tramps by in the March gloom. Reinhard Heydrich, Hitler's personal favorite, is assassinated on a street corner (the first killer's gun jams, but the second hurls a hand grenade), and hundreds have to die or suffer horribly in the furious retaliation. Jan Masaryk, a liberal who tried to work with Stalin, is pushed to his death from yet another window, his fingernails scrabbling on the sill as he discovers for certain that democracy is incompatible with Communism, or was it the other way round? Rudolf Slansky and Vlada Clementis, guilty of being Jewish at a time when Stalin was displeased with Jews, are hanged by their revolutionary comrades, swiftly cremated, and their ashes spitefully used to grit the snowy roads. Russian tanks crawl through sullen crowds, their crews puzzled because they had expected to be welcomed. The affronted people hold up signs, in good, grammatical Russian, saying politely, "Go Home." When this fails, they try Molotov cocktails, and Jan Palach burns himself to death.

After too much of this, enormous peaceful multitudes demand and achieve the return of their lost liberty. It is a happy ending, though too late for several million people unlucky enough

to live and die in all the unhappy eras. We have heard and read Prague's name in ancient newsreels and history books. We know it as the scene of Franz Kafka's hopeless *Trial* and perhaps as the home of the Good Soldier Schweik, who responds to authority by having another drink. Like Rome or Jerusalem, its name sounds in the mind like a bell or a snatch of music, plangent and melancholy.

So it is, in any case, for me. Prague the city is as mysterious and somber as you might expect, if not more so. Something about this dark bend on the Vltava River seems to attract melodrama and woe and inspire people to futile but admirable acts of resistance to historical inevitability.

I was advised to travel there more than three decades ago by someone who had been a courier for Stalin's Comintern in the years before 1939. This wife of a prominent British labor union leader had carried messages to Moscow and gold to London, often passing through the Czech capital on her secret travels, lodged in the best hotels, clad in couture clothes and provided with the smartest luggage, for in those less egalitarian days rich voyagers attracted less attention from customs men than the shabby poor. Thanks to her continuing sympathies with the Soviet empire, she had been back since.

In those days, Eastern and Central Europe were barely visited by British people. They did not, she said, know what they were missing. "Go now," she urged. "There is nowhere in Europe where you can still feel and see what the

Continent was like before the Second World War."

So it proved. There were no guidebooks or reliable street plans to be found. The official railroad map of Europe ended at the Iron Curtain. The booking clerks had to unearth special procedures to obtain our tickets. Our passports were sent off to Prague to be unstitched, reassembled, and photocopied by the Secret Police. But we persisted. The train, once it had crawled past the dragon's teeth and barbed wire coils of the frontier, slowed to the pace of half a century ago. Through the somnolent afternoon, elderly waiters in the dining car served a weighty lunch of pork, dumplings, and beer as we wound past decayed spas and sad, dispossessed castles. We fell at last into the dark gravitational pull of Moscow, passing dispirited industrial cities hung with red banners and then, in the Prague suburbs, vast sidings full of Soviet rolling stock marked with the hammer and sickle. Then we were there.

The stone crown of Central Europe was improbably lovely but also black and cold, unspoiled only because nobody could afford to spoil it, unbombed only because it had been handed over captive. Even so, it was all still there, though much of it was prevented from falling down only by large baulks of dirty timber jammed against sagging walls. It was full of genuine fear, something the Western visitor could selfishly enjoy, much as one enjoys a good ghost story because he knows that the evil is contained within secure bor-

ders. There were no tourists, only perplexed North Korean exchange students, their hair massacred in the style later indissolubly associated with Kim Jong Il, gaping at the sooty spires and mad, triumphalist Baroque churches of the Old Town. I even acquired a personal Secret Police escort, who took me out to meals and drove me around in the mistaken belief that I was more than I seemed to be and would somehow reveal myself if given enough Pilsner beer. I was approached on trams by sad men who thanked me (as if I were responsible) for the BBC Czech service, their only source of truth. I was approached in hotels by Anglophile black Cuban students who wanted to drink rum with an Englishman.

But Englishmen have a special difficulty with Prague, the place we merrily betrayed in 1938, hoping to save our own bacon by cooking the Czechs' goose. In a way, we betrayed it again in 1948 and 1968, when we peaceably abided by the unspoken agreement that we could live as we pleased in Western Europe if we let the Russians do what they liked in the East.

I went back again and again while Prague languished under the stupid rule of the Communist Party, until the astonishing week when all that stopped.

Then I didn't return for almost 20 years. I could not quite bear to. After the impossible sweetness of November 1989, when the forces of good just for once appeared to triumph completely over the forces of wickedness, I thought it could never be any better. I was swept along the great streets in the snow, under icy blue skies, in a great triumphal festival of the newly liberated, and it seemed as if Christmas had arrived early.

I heard in the years afterward that it had not been quite so sweet, that the KGB themselves might have had a hand in the all-too-easy overthrow of Com-

munism. It was even revealed that the student whose death we had all been protesting so righteously hadn't actually died or even been seriously hurt. Vaclav Havel, like so many revolutionaries, gradually transformed himself from a tribune of liberty into a slightly tiresome figure of woolly, modish liberalism.

Parties of British youths, attracted by

cheap beer, infested the ancient city, yelling and spewing among the monuments. The previously untouched facades began to wear the universal livery of global branding. Czechoslovakia itself fell apart. Both segments were gobbled up by the European Union.

I went back, a little reluctantly, by the route Adolf Hitler liked to take from

CAPITALISM DIDN'T CAUSE THE CRISIS ...

GOVERNMENT DID.

The conventional wisdom holds that deregulated or unregulated capitalism caused the financial crisis. As usual, the conventional wisdom is wrong.

In the first comprehensive scholarly look at the crisis, 12 economists and political scientists from all parts of the political spectrum agree: government policies caused the financial crisis. In short: this crisis was the "perfect storm" of modern, Progressive regulatory government.

In his introduction to the issue, all of the contributory regulations are drawn together by *Critical Review* editor Jeffrey Friedman, who shows that the two deeper problems were "Hayekian": first, the complexity of capitalism; second, the complexity of the web of regulations that governments have enacted to control capitalism. While the perverse effects of some of these regulations were predicted, nobody—not even the "experts"—could have known how disastrously the regulations would interact with each other. This is why the crisis surprised virtually everyone.

This volume is written by scholars but edited for accessibility to the educated layman. It is the perfect gift for intellectually voracious high-school or college students. While supplies last, bulk orders for classroom use will be accepted at a reduced rate.

CAUSES OF THE CRISIS VOLUME 21 | NUMBER 2 | 2009
ISSN 0891-3811

Critical Review
A Journal of Politics and Society

From Deposit Insurance to Banking Regulation to Financial Collapse	Viral V. Acharya Matthew Richardson
Why the Economists Got It Wrong	David Colander, et al.
The Crisis of Progressive Regulation	Jeffrey Friedman
Monetary Policy, Tax Policy, and Bubbles: 2008 & 1929	Steven Gjerstad Vernon L. Smith
Playing by the Basel Rules When You Are "Too Big to Fail"	Juliusz Jablecki Mateusz Machaj
Monetary Policy and Other Policy Errors	John B. Taylor
The Subprime Bubble	Peter J. Wallison
In Defense of Credit-Default Swaps	Peter J. Wallison
The Credit-Rating Agencies' Legally Protected Monopoly	Lawrence J. White

"On the libertarian side, a small group of academics affiliated with *Critical Review* is quietly working a revolution."
—*The American Conservative*, cover story, Aug. 29, 2005

Order online at www.criticalreview.com

Berlin down to Dresden, now living proof that you can put the clock back, as its lovely domes and towers rise again from the wreckage of bombing and the grimy neglect of socialism. The journey is a poignant one, past the glum fortress towers of Pirna where the Third Reich pioneered the slaughter of the mentally handicapped (“we do it in the womb and so get away with it”) and then along the melodramatic gorge of the Elbe, not unlike the Potomac as seen from Harpers Ferry. Like Hitler, I had no need to pause at the Czech frontier. Along with all the borders of continental Europe, it has ceased to exist, smashed not by tanks but by the mighty decrees of the European Commission.

The Vienna Express roars on regardless, and the traveler must look closely at inn signs and such things to make out that he has passed from Germany into the Czech lands. Or has he? For this is the very Sudetenland that provided the pretext for the Munich crisis, in those days a German minority enclave in the invented state of Czechoslovakia. It is now ostensibly restored to Czech rule, but the Czech Republic is only a feeble vassal of the mighty European Union, which differs from all previous empires in not having an emperor—at least not yet.

How odd it is, as we roll past the plainly Germanic towns and churches, to realize that so many of the Third Reich’s objectives in Europe seem to have been achieved by other means. From Calais on the English Channel to Brest-Litovsk on the River Bug, there is hardly a frontier post still standing, thanks to the astonishingly important but little known Schengen Agreement, which prevents a score of formerly sovereign nations from guarding their boundaries with passport controls or customs posts. If you no longer have such things to decide where your laws begin and end, are you a nation or a province?

The Czechs and the Slovaks are separated once again, more politely than they were in 1940 but also more permanently. The Balkans are, well, Balkanized. Germany does not stretch, as stated in the suppressed first verse of the old national anthem, “Von der Maas bis an die Memel, von der Etsch bis an den Belt,” which would carry it north into Denmark, east to Lithuania, and some way south of the Alps. But its current eastern frontier on the Oder certainly does not contain either its economic power or its political and diplomatic influence, which cover the entire European Union from Ireland’s Atlantic shores to the furthest corner of Romania. Within that zone, almost all the great Wilsonian creations of the Versailles Treaty have either ceased to exist or have had all the blood drained out of them.

But in Prague, futile but noble resistance to the spirit of the age survives. It is a minor survival, but an important one. The Czechs and Slovaks were barely independent before they were dependent again. They passed with amazing rapidity from the Soviet sphere of influence to rule from Brussels. Even so, there are still some Czechs who wonder if this is quite the liberation they had hoped for.

One such is Vaclav Klaus, a modern conservative hero, president of the republic. In 2003, Klaus succeeded his semi-namesake Vaclav Havel, who has taken a sort of vengeance by writing a play in which a wicked conservative president, Vlastik Klein—note the initials—takes over from a civilized liberal and cruelly tries to drive him from his official residence.

But Klaus, an economist and political conservative, the only major European political figure who doubts the evidence for manmade global warming, has bigger opponents. Despite the general collapse of the major political parties

(including his own Civic Democrats) into the arms of the EU project, he has so far managed to keep the Czech Republic from converting to the euro, the EU single currency that has robbed member countries of their independent fiscal policies. He refuses to fly the European Union’s blue and yellow flag from his residence, Prague’s Hradcany Castle, preferring his splendid personal standard, emblazoned with the fine motto “The Truth Prevails.” He has also so far refused to ratify the Lisbon Treaty, the founding constitution of the planned European superstate in all but name, which will transform the EU from a collection of formally independent nations into a “legal personality,” a nation on its own account able to take initiatives, with an executive president, a foreign minister, and a defense minister. This is perhaps the most important political development of our age, but is little discussed because so few professional politicians dare oppose it.

Their peoples do. Given the chance to vote on the first draft, the French and the Dutch both rejected it. A new, almost identical version was then prepared, which they were not allowed to vote on, in case they said “no” again. But it was still not over. Thanks to an excellent, rigorous constitution, the people of Ireland were permitted a say and—to the bilious rage of the EU establishment—declined quite loudly. It is because of this vote that President Klaus is not under any immediate pressure to give in and sign. But Ireland, devastated by the financial crisis and suddenly anxious to cling to its rich European nurse, is unlikely to hold out much longer and will—some time this fall—hold another referendum in which it will most likely come up with the “right” answer. All referendums in the EU are like this: “no” votes are temporary, “yes” votes are permanent.

Once that has happened, Prague Castle will once again stand alone and

isolated in a hostile Europe, almost the last outpost of old-fashioned national independence on a continent that has opted to sacrifice sovereignty for a dubious security. The world's first postmodern empire is being born. Nobody really knows if Klaus can be made to cave in. It may yet be that he can single-handedly prevent the thing from proceeding. His constitutional position is unclear and much disputed by experts.

FRANZ KAFKA WOULD HAVE RECOGNIZED IT IMMEDIATELY: A MALEVOLENT AND UNRESPONSIVE BUREAUCRACY, CONVINCED OF ITS OWN BENEVOLENCE.

Prague recently saw a very telling drama—Havel might have scripted it—in which the two forces of European integration and national independence came face to face. A member of the EU's feeble Supreme Soviet-like Chamber of Deputies, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, came to Prague to lecture Klaus on his duties. It was an astonishing confrontation, overturning accepted wisdom about the nature of Left and Right. The Left, who claim to be the romantic rebels and lovers of liberty, revealed themselves as the dogmatic and autocratic spokesmen of remote power. The Right, derided for decades as supporters of dictatorship and closet fascists, showed themselves to be the modern world's true revolutionaries and romantics.

Look at the principal characters. Klaus, born in 1941, and Cohn-Bendit, born in 1945, have startlingly different pasts, though they are men of roughly the same generation. In 1968, the beginning of our modern era, Klaus was experiencing the towering hope of the Prague Spring—a brief dash for freedom—and the miserable disappointment and fear that followed its extinction by genuine, iron-bound killer tyrants.

Cohn-Bendit was a rather mature stu-

dent, leading the fun revolutionaries of Paris in calls for easier access to the girls' dormitories. For all his cries of repression, he never risked anything serious or understood what it meant to live in a police state.

Cohn-Bendit, once called "Danny the Red," has remained in the forefront of radical chic. He is now a Green rather than a Red, an intolerant zealot of the manmade-climate-change lobby, a sup-

porter of liberal wars, and a keen Europhile. Flanked by an Irish Euro MP embarrassed by his countrymen's rejection of Lisbon, Cohn-Bendit addressed Klaus as if the president of the Czech Republic were a disobedient subordinate. He also rudely thrust an EU flag across the president's desk.

But he was taken aback by the robust response. Having first lectured the president on how he was wrong about global warming, Cohn-Bendit began explaining to him what his presidential obligations were, that he would have to sign the Lisbon Treaty if the Czech Parliament approved it, which is almost certainly incorrect. Then, amazingly, he told the head of state, "I don't care about your opinions on [the treaty]."

Czechs have a special reason to dislike being ordered around by foreign politicians. They all know how Hitler screamed so wildly at poor President Emil Hacha in 1939 that the aged professor collapsed and had to be revived by injections. They also know how Stalin ordered them to reject American Marshall Aid and how Leonid Brezhnev instructed Alexander Dubcek to strangle the Prague Spring and kidnapped him when he would not comply.

Klaus, not intimidated, retaliated. "This is incredible," he spat back. He compared Cohn-Bendit's dictatorial lecture to the past behavior of the Kremlin. "I did not think anything like this was possible. I have not experienced anything like this for the past 19 years [since the Soviets left]. I thought it was a matter of the past, that we live in a democracy." Then he added these inflammatory words, which the EU would much rather nobody had uttered: "But it is post-democracy, really, that rules the EU."

And so it is. The new monolith, gradually taking shape in the concrete halls of the Low Countries, is too bureaucratic to be frightening, too slow and devious to cause alarm. Ponderously, deliberately, tediously, it gathers power. It jeers at its opponents for exaggerating its ambitions. Then, when these opponents turn out to have been right, it says that more people should have protested at the time, and it is too late to go back now. Its mighty volumes of treaties and rules are more unalterable than the Laws of the Medes and the Persians—and probably a good deal harder to interpret. It never abandons an objective, merely repeats the attempt in a subtly different way until it succeeds.

Franz Kafka would have recognized it immediately: a malevolent and unresponsive bureaucracy, convinced of its own benevolence, against which there is no appeal and from which there is no escape. You might as well try to cut fog with a sword. Perhaps that is why Europe's last stand against this nebulous monster is likely to take place amid the melancholy towers of Prague, where they understand these things better than the rest of us. ■

Peter Hitchens is a columnist for the London Mail on Sunday and blogs at <http://hitchensblog.mailonsunday.co.uk>.

Cold War Without End

America never had a post-communist revolution.

By David Brown

THIS YEAR MARKS the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Presumably Putin's Russia won't be in a celebratory mood. The question is: should America be? While the former Warsaw Pact nations dropped their planned economies in search of fresh free-market identities, the collapse of communism failed to inspire a similar civilizational stock-taking on the part of the United States.

Might the past two decades—years fraught with wars of sanctions, occupations, and terror—have been different if it had? Precedent for paradigm-shifting change was at hand. A revolution in American foreign-policy thinking had followed the destruction of Nazi Germany; the old isolationism gave way to a rising liberal internationalism sustained by a powerful national-security state. The events of 1989 neither changed nor challenged that. Pentagonistas discovered, rather, a happy new lease on life in the Persian Gulf, the Balkan Peninsula, and elsewhere. The military mindset survived. Two decades on, this metaphorical American “wall” has yet to fall.

Some argue that the rise of Islamic fundamentalism made a post-Soviet peace dividend impossible. Yet even before 9/11, the U.S. reflexively sought monsters to destroy. In the early 1990s, a surging Asian economy alarmed both Wall and Main Streets, inspiring George Friedman and Meredith Lebard's vexatious *Coming War With Japan*. Soon after, the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia elevated the Serb nationalist Slobodan Milosevic to *Der Führer*

status in the West. “What if someone had listened to Winston Churchill and stood up to Adolf Hitler earlier?” asked President Clinton as he sought to justify the intensive U.S.-led air assault on Milosevic's forces. “How many people's lives might have been saved, and how many American lives might have been saved?” Hundreds of Yugoslav civilians were killed in Clinton's sortie war.

And the beat went on. Looking, as he put it, to “rid the world of the evildoers,” President George W. Bush put would-be nuclear-club crashers Iraq, Iran, and North Korea at the top of the country's “most wanted” list.

In 1989, the intellectual mood went against any rethinking of American militarism. That summer, *The National Interest* published Francis Fukuyama's “The End of History?” a *longue durée* study contending that the ascent of political pluralism, market capitalism, and human rights prefaced a more peaceful world. The implosion of the Soviet empire appeared to make Fukuyama a prophet. But not everyone agreed. In a 1993 *Foreign Affairs* article entitled “The Clash of Civilizations?” Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington projected a divided planet rocked by ethnic and religious violence.

Neither thesis proved conclusive. The Gulf War, radical Islam, and the de-liberalization of post-Yeltsin Russia seriously challenged Fukuyama's claims, while Huntington's compartmentalization of dynamic cultures into static categories such as the “Muslim World” or “Western Civilization” invited sharp criticism and

failed to explain such geopolitical realities as the lack of clash in U.S.-Saudi relations or the advent of democracy in India, South Korea, and Turkey. More problematic, neither Fukuyama nor Huntington confronted the American leviathan. In their respective analyses, inevitability took over—a future of assured peace in Fukuyama's case, a future of assured conflict in Huntington's. This let the U.S. empire off the hook. Either America led the way toward greater global ideological accord or it needed to circle the wagons and wait for the coming Chinese and Islamic challenges to popular government.

In retrospect, neither “The End of History” nor “The Clash of Civilizations” prepared the United States for the post-Cold War world. Yet a reliable school of creative thinkers existed—even if it did include a dead apostate or two. In the works of historians Charles Beard (1874-1948), William Appleman Williams (1921-90), and Christopher Lasch (1932-94) a cohesive assessment of the American predicament emerged. These scholars—connected by their common midwestern anti-metropolitanism and suspicion of capitalism, as well as a hostility to liberal internationalism—created a counter historiography that challenged their country's injurious embrace of consumerism, militarism, and imperialism.

A native of Knightstown, Indiana, Beard was perhaps the most important American historian of the 20th century. His research on the economic origins of the Constitution, historical relativism, and U.S. foreign policy continues to

spark interest and debate. After assailing Franklin Roosevelt's foreign policy, however, he became a pariah in his profession. His book *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War* (1948) infuriated historians who rejected its now generally accepted premise that FDR promised peace—"I'm not going to send your boys to fight in foreign wars," he assured Bostonians just six days before the 1940 election—while moving behind the scenes to challenge the Axis powers.

A number of influential East and West Coast scholars sharply denounced Beard. Stanford historian Thomas Bailey wrote that his book constituted "a disgraceful mishandling of the evidence. One is forced to ask one's self whether the author is a dolt or intellectually dishonest. ... Beard is guilty of suppressing facts, hand-picking others, overstepping others, and misrepresenting still others—for all of which shysterism we would flunk the dissertation of a Ph.D. candidate in history." Bailey had his own facts down cold—"we must 'sell' democracy vigorously, even militantly," he wrote in a popular study on U.S.-Soviet relations.

Harvard's Samuel Eliot Morison used his 1950 American Historical Association presidential address, "Faith of a Historian," to scold Beard for failing to ready his countrymen for combat. Beard, he argued, "taught that no war was necessary and no war did any good. ... It only rendered the generation of youth which came to maturity in 1940 spiritually unprepared for the war they had to fight." In effect, Morison called upon historians to produce scholarship sympathetic to the nation's emerging Cold War needs—and to marginalize those heretical colleagues who challenged the new foreign-policy consensus.

A self-described "American from the wilds of Indiana," Beard's midwestern isolationism clashed with Morison's Boston-Brahmin internationalism. Disillusioned

by World War I, Beard had broken intellectually from an imperial mindset long before FDR's presidency. In a perceptive 1925 essay that appeared in *The Nation*—"War With Japan: What Shall We Get Out of It?"—he referenced the recent passage of the Exclusion Act, which barred Asian immigration into the U.S. and provoked the press on both sides of the Pacific to issue op-ed calls to arms. No doubt American racial anxieties contributed to the law, but Beard detected a more complex and widely embraced imperial apparatus at work. The "Big Navy Boys" in Washington, he maintained, looked to enlarge their service's prestige and importance, organized labor hoped to use anti-Japanese propaganda to secure a preference for white workers, and ultra-patriots anticipated pushing "national and Christian virtues" around the globe. "All these [interests]," Beard wrote, "could be easily held in check by a President and a State Department really bent on peace with honor." But the will simply wasn't there. Instead, Americans masked their global ambitions in a self-deceptive piety—they fought, he concluded, a "perpetual war for perpetual peace."

In 1947, the year before Beard's death, the controversial historian William Appleman Williams completed a Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin. More than any other scholar, he advanced the Beardian critique of empire into the postwar period. Born in tiny Atlantic, Iowa, Williams warmly recalled growing up with "people who had community values at the center of their lives ... [people] who turned the soil and harvest[ed] the crops [and] met others who sold and fixed the tools of the farm..." A World War II veteran, he arrived at the University of Wisconsin at a vital intellectual moment. For among the scholars in the history department were the distinguished early Americanist Merrill Jensen, the historian of the American peace movement Merle Curti, and the foreign-

policy expert—and future UW president—Fred Harvey Harrington. All were Beardians. As Harrington later remembered, "Bill made his reputation advocating an economic interpretation of foreign policy. But when he arrived, he was in no sense economic. We fed him Charles Beard, which is the core of his work."

The University of Wisconsin had also once been the academic home of the iconic historian of the frontier, Frederick Jackson Turner, whose influence still lingered in Madison. Like many scholars, Williams's education was shaped by Turner's essay "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (1893), which famously concluded, "The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development."

Williams was interested in the foreign-policy implications of Turner's thesis. If the closing of the frontier meant the death of American development, then did survival demand an overseas imperium? "He would be a rash prophet," wrote Turner, "who should assert that the expansive character of American life has now entirely ceased." Five years later, the U.S. declared war on Spain, took its Philippine possessions, and became a Pacific player.

Armed with a provocative mix of Turnerianism and Beardianism, Williams rewrote the history of American foreign relations. Most notably, his disquieting *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (1959) rattled the cage of the foreign-policy establishment and its apologists. While they uncritically declared a militarized containment of communism to be a new and perhaps temporary phase in U.S. history, Williams dissented. The Monroe Doctrine, after all, had long ago deemed European ideologies incompatible with the free politics of the New World—and proposed to "contain" aristocracy in the Old. More generally,

Tragedy resisted Henry Luce's jingoistic call for an American Century. Instead, its author denied his country the moral high ground, insisting that economics rather than idealism drove its diplomacy. He shared, in other words, Beard's belief that capitalism's endless appetite for markets agitated the international scene. In doing so, Williams audaciously challenged his country's sense of self-identity. "Isolationism' for America," he wrote, "is a denial of its entire cultural tradition of expansion and empire." Imperialism had become "a way of life."

Frustration shaped Williams's work. In 1945—as in 1989—there arose an opportunity (also missed) for the U.S. to redefine itself as something other than a global hegemon. A similar discontent rippled through the *oeuvre* of his sometime correspondent, the cultural critic Christopher Lasch. An Omaha native and son of Robert Lasch, the Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and opponent of the Vietnam War, Christopher trafficked in a tradition of populist and progressive era politics. He impugned liberalism as frankly elitist and impulsively hostile to "the positive features of petty-bourgeois culture: its moral realism, its understanding that everything has its price, its respect for limits, its skepticism about progress." It was this skepticism—of *laissez faire*, of a consumer utopia, and of America's presumptive moral right to remake the world—that established his connections to Beard and Williams.

In his most ambitious book, *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics*, Lasch described an American politics in paralysis. Both New Deal liberals and Reagan Republicans shared a common commitment to ever higher standards of living. And this required a divided world's cooperation. Such prospects looked increasingly dicey. "Our twentieth-century experience of imperial rivalries, international competition for markets, and global wars,"

Lasch wrote, "makes it hard for us to share the Enlightenment convictions that capitalism would promote world peace." Yet the illusion of "progress" persisted. The shock Americans experienced on 9/11 is an indictment of how little they comprehended the implications of their global imprint, both economically and militarily.

More than a critic, Lasch—along with his midwestern predecessors—offered various responses to the nation's predicament. Beard called for an American continentalism content with hemispheric self-sufficiency, while Williams counseled for the rejection of a militaristic "*weltanschauung*" that sought "to establish and maintain the American Way as the global status quo." With greater specificity, Lasch showed that an alternative tradition to the consumer-imperial state existed in the United States. He drew a discernable line connecting the republican realism of the founding generation with the Populist revolt of the late 19th century and the artisan labor unions of the 20th. These and many other political, spiritual, and class expressions of a native anti-utopianism, Lasch contended, offered a patriot's hope for a different path.

Yet they have made little impact. The national purpose keeps investing in one last crusade to bring about a peace millennium that never comes. The Spanish-American War led to a protracted debate over the U.S. role in the Pacific, which culminated disastrously at Pearl Harbor; Wilson's "war to make the world safe for democracy" contributed to the rise of fascism and communism; World War II gave way to two major Asian wars fought within a broader stand-off with the Soviet Union. The second of those conflicts, in Vietnam, did raise the specter of superpower overexpansion, but ultimately contributed to a fresh round of militarization and the country's avid desire, as George H.W. Bush put it,

to "kick the Vietnam Syndrome at last."

Perhaps, in the end, the peace dividend is the war dividend. The military-industrial complex offers the only way of life that many of us have ever known. It has come to define not merely American identity but American destiny.

Yet the price we are paying as a nation has become too high to ignore. A trillion dollar defense budget and a series of undeclared wars challenge the Republic. A homeland-security state that permits law-enforcement agencies to search the phone records, e-mail communications, and medical and financial records of its citizens compromises the very freedoms it purports to protect.

Thinking back about what a Beard, a Williams, or a Lasch might have to say about our new century of terror, a few ideas come to mind. Americans might do well to question how they define progress; to stop confusing standard of living with standard of materialism; to hold their government accountable for the policies it pursues in their names; to call for an end to the permanent war economy; and to demonstrate faith that their nation can thrive outside a hyper-power framework. The Republic awaits our reply.

Then again, we have been down this well-intentioned path to perdition before. Twenty years ago, in the Cold War's dying days, Mikhail Gorbachev grandly announced, "the world is leaving one epoch and entering another, we are at the beginning of a long road to a lasting, peaceful era." Thus did posterity record the false hopes and broken promises of 1989—the "miracle year." Happy anniversary. ■

David Brown is the author of Beyond the Frontier: The Midwestern Voice in American Historical Writing and Richard Hofstadter: An Intellectual Biography. He teaches history at Elizabethtown College in Pennsylvania.

Bringing Down the House

Why home prices won't rise again

By Charles Hugh Smith

THE FINANCIAL MEDIA and government officials are looking for a recovery in the housing market to “restart the economy.” The entire world—or at least every exporter from Shanghai to Bonn who is desperately dependent on the free-spending American consumer—is hoping that housing is about to re-ascend to its glorious bubble-era heights. But that is not going to happen—not this year, not even in ten years, for several fundamental reasons.

1. Bubbles do not re-inflate in the asset class that just popped. Tulip-bulb valuations did not rise again to stratospheric heights after the Tulip Craze went bust, nor did the NASDAQ dot-com bubble re-inflate, for the very good reason that bubbles are never based on rational valuations. They are the result of a psychological state of mania that cannot be reinstated once lost.

Consider tech stock Cisco Systems, a well-managed “real company” that continues to make profits providing goods and services. Having replaced the bankrupt General Motors in the Dow Jones Industrial Average, Cisco currently trades at around \$17 a share, down from its dot-com bubble valuation of about \$81 per share.

To recover its bubble-era valuation, Cisco would have to rise fivefold. That's highly unlikely. Now that the hysteria has dissipated, Cisco is valued on more rational metrics like earnings, profits, and cash flow.

Mania always moves on to a new asset class. After the dot-com bubble,

speculators turned to housing. Once the housing bubble collapsed, the mania shifted to the bond market. Now that the bond bubble is bursting—that spike to nosebleed territory in December 2008 was the dead giveaway—the only asset class that hasn't already been blown into a bubble is precious metals and gold.

2. Inflation sets the “recovery” target ever higher. While we are in a deflationary period right now, a serious amount of inflation occurred between Cisco's peak in January 2000 and the present. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' inflation calculator, \$81 in 2000 is \$100 in current dollars. So Cisco would have to rise by that much more to match its bubble-era valuation. The same is true for housing.

Let's say a house that sold for \$100,000 in 1995 was valued at \$400,000 at the housing-bubble peak in 2006. If history is any guide, then housing will retrace to its pre-bubble valuation, as that is the usual progression of bubbles and their demises.

Now if inflation ramps up and ravages the value of the dollar, the price of a tangible good like a home might well rise more or less along with inflation, as people will be trying to turn their rapidly devaluing dollars into some tangible good as a means of preserving capital. But if inflation is clipping along at 10 percent a year, and the house returns to its bubble-era value of \$400,000, that \$400,000 doesn't retain the same purchasing power as it did in 2006.

Consider the stock market in the inflationary period of the 1970s. While

the market wobbled from 1,000 in 1966 to 1,000 in 1982 16 years later, inflation destroyed two-thirds of the value of the dollar. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, which tends to understate inflation so as not to alarm the masses unnecessarily, \$1 in 1966 was worth 34 cents in 1982. Thus people who held stocks for those 16 years did not retain their wealth as the Dow Jones retouched the magic 1,000 mark—they lost two-thirds of their investment.

It is easy to foresee the same thing happening in housing should inflation ignite. Over the next 16 years, the house that sold for \$400,000 in 2006 may well rise once again to that nominal price, but the inflation-adjusted value could well be closer to \$100,000 when priced in (pre-housing bubble) 1995 dollars.

This is why nominal prices in stocks, housing, and bonds are essentially meaningless. All assets have to be valued in terms of purchasing power, and as imperfect as any inflation/deflation gauge might be, it's still a better guide to purchasing power than nominal price.

3. Perhaps counterintuitively, deflation also ravages bubble-era valuations. You might think that because inflation is tough on bubble-era valuations when priced in purchasing power (or some non-paper metric like gold), then deflation would be dandy. But deflation wipes out bubble-era valuations just as assiduously as inflation does.

In deflation, debt grows ever more burdensome as cash becomes scarce and wages and income drop. As a result,

assets dependent on leveraged debt such as real estate drop in value. In deflation, real estate becomes a capital trap, which loses value as cash gains in value. As incomes plummet, so do rents, the income stream that real estate brings, further impairing its value.

Deflation often accompanies depression, and nothing is more of a capital trap than an empty house or building earning no income. Compared to that negative return—recall that cash-starved cities and counties will still be collecting property taxes on vacant property—cash that is earning interest looks very attractive. This capital flight creates another drag on housing valuations.

So whatever the future holds—deflation, inflation, or periods of one following the other—housing will never return to its bubble-era valuations when measured by purchasing power adjusted for inflation.

MOVING?

Changing your address?

Simply go to **The American Conservative** website, www.amconmag.com

Click “subscribe” and then click “address change.”

To access your account make sure you have your *TAC* mailing label. You may also subscribe or renew online.

If you prefer to mail your address change send your *TAC* label with your new address to:

The American Conservative
Subscription Department
P.O. Box 9030
Maple Shade, NJ 08052-9030

4. The fundamental driver of the housing bubble was once-in-a-lifetime low interest rates and loose lending. Bond yields and thus interest rates tend to move in generational cycles of about 20 years—occasionally as short as 17 years and as long as 27 years. The current decline in yields has now run 27 years, the historical maximum for such cycles, thus we can anticipate that yields and interest rates will be rising for the next generation.

Why would interest rates rise? Easy. The U.S. is borrowing trillions of dollars a year, and once the rest of the world either runs out of cash or the desire to give us all their surplus capital, interest rates will rocket regardless of what the Fed or U.S. Treasury do. Picture our financial royalty standing knee-deep in a rising tide demanding that the waters recede. Good luck with that, fellas.

As for loose and/or fraudulent lending, you know the story. Though there are many causes for the housing bubble's expansion and collapse, this is the most basic: the bar for qualifying for a mortgage was lowered to near zero. This can be illustrated by a steeplechase analogy in which the prudently high mortgage qualification hurdle of “20 percent down, verified income, and no more than 35 percent of income devoted to a mortgage” was replaced by one mere inches in height. Everyone with a pulse and the will to stretch the truth not only qualified for the race, they all crossed the finish line with flying colors. Is it any wonder that millions of marginal buyers leaped in? Their marginality was quickly revealed, however, once they left the track and returned to real life.

Now that the entire charade of passing off millions of highly risky, doomed-to-default mortgages via securitization to unwary investors has ended, risk avoidance has led not just to a return to higher qualifying standards but to a raising of the original bar. In the post-bubble

aftermath, the hurdle not only excludes marginal risky borrowers but some of those who might have qualified before the bubble mania infected the housing and lending markets.

So if fundamental drivers of insanely low interest rates and loose lending are not coming back, then precisely what forces will re-inflate the housing bubble? The answer: none.

Demographics? Housing density has been falling for decades. Everyone wanted not just his own room but his own condo or house. As the density trend reverses course (greetings, returning unemployed offspring—your room is untouched since you left for college), all future population growth can be easily accommodated by the existing housing stock.

Speculative mania? That drunken circus came to Housing Town and left, never to return in our lifetimes. If you're 3 years old you may live to see another housing bubble in your dotage.

5. The bull market recession-recovery cycle is broken. Standard-issue financial pundits are hopelessly blinded by their Cargo Cult belief—in which you paint a rock to look like a radio and then use it to plead for the return of well-stocked Liberty ships—that the long postwar era of prosperity is still intact.

For the past 60 years, the cycle was predictable: a recession would wring out credit and inventory excesses, setting up a recovery. But the mechanisms that provided stability to the U.S. economy are now broken. The global credit market dislocations, the extremes of leverage still not unwound, the accounting trickery and fraud still lurking in countless balance sheets (or even worse, in off-balance-sheet accounts), the unprecedented destruction of middle-class wealth—these factors plus another dozen or so too enervating to list require us to face the disagreeable

conclusion that we are in uncharted territory, and appeals to rock radios (“green shoots”) are unlikely to hasten the return of prosperity.

Even worse, our government is straining with every fiber of its vast being to extend the excesses of credit, debt, and leverage that created the housing bubble and guaranteed its collapse. The catastrophically bankrupt state of California managed to find \$100 million to help residents buy sparkling new homes—never mind the hundreds of thousands of perfectly livable homes now on the market.

We can safely predict that all the blandishments of bankrupt governments attempting to re-inflate the housing bubble have approximately the same chances for success as pleas screamed at a gaily-painted rock.

But there is a funny little mechanism called the free market, which has a long history of resolving credit/debt/leverage/valuation excesses by enabling prices of assets, be they mortgages, homes, land, or derivatives, to fall to the point that entrepreneurs can pick up the pieces and actually turn a profit.

In a similar fashion, the bloated inventory of unsold vacant housing will magically decline once the price of owning a house falls substantially below the cost of renting a house. In other words, when it actually makes financial sense to buy a house and live there rather than gambling on its value as a leveraged speculation, people will act in their own self-interest, and a real recovery—not one based on a speculative bubble in housing—will finally become possible. ■

Charles Hugh Smith is proprietor of the Of Two Minds blog (www.oftwo-minds.com/blog.html). The author of seven books, Smith's next title is Survival+: Structuring Prosperity for Yourself and the Nation (Spring 2010, Feral House Publishing).

Once you've developed a taste for regime change, apparently it's hard to stop. Rahm Emanuel, President Obama's chief of staff, is coordinating a White House effort to remake the Israeli government. His father Binyamin, a doctor and former Irgun terrorist, is the closest thing Israel has to home-grown royalty. Emanuel himself served in the Israeli army during the first Gulf War, vacations in Israel, and has extensive personal connections that span the country's political spectrum. The Obama administration, discouraged by reports that Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu disparaged and even ridiculed the U.S. president's Cairo speech (even though Israel had been carefully briefed in advance), has begun a low-key unofficial effort to replace the country's leadership. The choice of Rahm Emanuel, a pro-Israel hardliner, to head the campaign is intended to limit criticism that there might be an anti-Israel agenda at work.

Obama believes Netanyahu will not be able or even willing to move his predominantly right-wing government toward the American objective of a two-state Israel/Palestine solution. Without such an outcome, the administration believes it will be impossible to advance to phase two of its broader Middle Eastern policy, which is the gathering of moderate Arab nations into a league with the U.S. to forestall Iran's drive to become a regional hegemon and nuclear power. There is particular concern in Washington that Tehran is extending its influence to include radical Sunni groups, as it already co-operates with Hamas. Attempts to convince Israel to make some major concessions in exchange for an American pledge of action on Iran have not worked, with Netanyahu going on the defensive and proposing a series of half measures intended only to buy time.

Emanuel, who will suggest to prominent Israelis that Netanyahu's continued leadership role is not desirable, has carefully covered himself by discussing his plans with a number of American Jewish Democratic Party leaders. Most are supportive. Congressman Gary Ackerman (D-N.Y.) favors former Israeli minister of foreign affairs Tzipi Livni to replace Netanyahu. Livni has close relations with Emanuel and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, as well as with many in Congress. She is viewed as both a moderate and a realist, and it helps that she actually outpolled Netanyahu in the last Israeli election, though she was unable to pull together a coalition.

Clinton is helping the Emanuel effort by making negative comments about Netanyahu's reliance on extremists, including Minister of Interior Avigdor Lieberman, who supports racist legislation directed at Israel's Arab minority and who recently confirmed planned expansion of West Bank settlements in defiance of Washington. Emanuel believes that Netanyahu will probably not be able to maintain his coalition in power for more than the next several months, particularly if subjected to sniping from Washington, due to defections from already disgruntled Labor Party politicians. That will give Livni and her Kadima Party the opportunity to resume power. Not surprisingly, Netanyahu is aware of what is going on.

Philip Giraldi, a former CIA Officer, is a fellow with the American Conservative Defense Alliance.

Russian Lessons

We aren't the first to try nation-building in Afghanistan.

By Paul Robinson

WE MET ON A WET winter day outside Altufievskaya station at the northern end of the Moscow subway system and drove into the countryside. Once the senior official responsible for Soviet economic and technical assistance to Afghanistan, Valerii Ivanov has had frequent visitors from the West since 2001. Each time, he explained his experiences developing the Afghan economy, and each time his visitors nodded politely and promptly ignored everything he said.

The situation in Afghanistan now is quite different from what it was in the 1980s. President Hamid Karzai enjoys genuine popular support, unlike the Soviets and their allies in the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan. The Taliban, despite their safe havens in Pakistan, receive nothing on the scale of money and weapons that the Mujahideen did in the 1980s. Nevertheless, casual dismissal of the past reveals a dangerous smugness as well as a profound ignorance of the Soviet-Afghan relationship.

Overshadowed by the publicity for President Barack Obama's surge of additional troops to Afghanistan, the promised civilian surge of economic and technical assistance has attracted far less attention. Obama has pledged "a dramatic increase in our civilian effort," including at least 600 nonmilitary advisers and billions of additional dollars of economic aid.

To win the war, however, the United States has to use its dollars much more effectively than Ivanov and his fellow

Soviets did. To date, it has not done so. In May, the U.S. special inspector general for Afghan reconstruction, Marine Corps Gen. Arnold Fields, published his first audit report. Despite billions already spent, he could not be sure that U.S. funds had been well used.

America's British and Canadian allies have also been talking of shifting their focus from combat to economic development. But their aid performance has been no better. A recent internal assessment for the British Department for International Development noted that more than half the UK's projects were likely to fail and only 4.5 percent provided "value for money." Nipa Banerjee, formerly Canada's senior aid official in Afghanistan, wrote in February 2009, "There seems to be little concrete evidence that aid activities are having a positive impact on the lives of Afghans. Despite deployment of vast efforts, impact on the ground appears inadequate."

Simply increasing the amount of aid is not the solution. The problem is neither too little money nor too few civilian advisers. These were not the problems for the Soviets either. Something deeper was, and is, at fault.

It suits our prejudices to imagine that the Soviets were solely agents of destruction. Yet while one arm of the Soviet state blew things up, the other built them, repaired them, and trained the local people to maintain them. In the upstairs office of his dacha, at the end of a bumpy village road that could do with some reconstruction of its own, Ivanov

printed off a list of projects the Soviets had completed. The relevant archives had disappeared, he complained, apparently tossed out by some bureaucrat in the 1990s, a time when Russians were trying to expunge any memory of their years in Afghanistan. (As a historian, I can only despair at such vandalism. Nevertheless, I have been able to confirm most of the details from other sources.)

Long before and all through the military occupation, the Soviets built roads, electric power stations and power lines, irrigation canals, factories, housing, grain elevators, bakeries, wells, automotive repair plants, airports, technical colleges, and much more. They trained tens of thousands of Afghan specialists, provided hundreds of thousands of tons of humanitarian assistance, and distributed food, seed, and fertilizer. They built schools and hospitals, too. "Equipment and medicines for two clinics, school desks and blackboards, furniture and clothing for young children," were among the aid delivered to Kabul, a 1988 issue of *Sotsialisticheskaya Industriya* reported.

Soviet economic and technical assistance to Afghanistan got underway in earnest in the mid-1950s during the premiership of Mohammed Daoud. The primary aim was political—to ensure that Afghanistan was friendly and stable—and the underlying economic premise was that Third World countries remained backward because of a lack of capital and the lingering results of colonial exploitation. Development meant building an independent industrial econ-

omy from its basic infrastructure up, using foreign aid to compensate for the lack of capital. The resulting industry would in turn generate more capital, which could be used to pay off debts and invest in more industry, thus kick-starting a virtuous circle of economic growth.

This logic meant that development became a simple engineering problem, a matter of building “stuff,” which in turn was meant to generate more “stuff.” It was, in a way, an extension of Lenin’s equation that communism = Soviet power + electrification.

The problem was that although the roads were built, the electrical stations constructed, and the canals dug, nothing followed. Roads did not increase commerce, electricity did not encourage private factories, and irrigation failed to boost agricultural productivity. A Soviet economist lamented that, despite all the aid, GDP per capita actually declined in the 1960s. Although it rose slightly in the 1970s, the gain was insignificant. “If the current tempo is maintained,” another Soviet expert commented, “Afghanistan will never reach the global average.”

In part, this was because of the industrial model. Both Soviet and Western aid largely bypassed the agricultural sector and did nothing to help the mass of the rural population in what is, after all, an almost entirely rural country. Irrigation projects—the Soviet-built Jalalabad and Sarde irrigation systems and the American-supported Helmand Arghandab Valley Authority (HAVA)—absorbed most of the money earmarked for agriculture. They did more harm than good. The HAVA, for instance, managed to reduce, rather than increase, agricultural production, as it led to waterlogging and later salination of the irrigated fields.

The industrial model was not the only problem. Soviet analysts eventually identified two key failings: lack of

human capital and weak institutions. In so doing, they discovered something the West has only woken up to lately.

Building “stuff” that the local people lack the skills to use or maintain is counterproductive. Irrigation systems led to sodden and salty fields because farmers, though skilled in thousand-year-old water-management techniques, did not know how to deal with the additional flows of water produced by new dams and canals. Similarly, there was a reason industrial productivity was low: there were too few trained personnel. Moreover, at the national level, sophisticated economic plans could be written only with the help of foreign advisers, and there were not enough people to manage and supervise.

Worse, foreign capital and new infrastructure did not generate additional investment because social and political institutions militated against it. As an American report noted, “The traditionally wealthy and powerful landowning and trading interests had previously seen a threat in the growth of a new group of industrialists and had supported those who advocated the dominance of government enterprise.” These groups therefore used their political power to ensure that the taxation system favored the importation of consumer goods that they traded, while discouraging investment in domestic industry.

Soviet economist E.R. Makhmudov drew similar conclusions, but took matters an important step further. Because economic progress was blocked by the landowning and trading interests mentioned above, “The experience of Afghan industrialization showed that resolving this problem required complete fundamental reforms of the entire social and economic structure of traditional society. ... This experience demonstrated that in the conditions of a developing state ... industrialization is

not only a social-economic, but also a political, problem.”

The Communists’ solution only made things worse. They chose not to reform but to smash the institutions that they believed stood in the way of progress. The Soviet-backed regime had almost no understanding of rural society, and its members were brutal, incompetent, and corrupt. The result was counter-revolution and war. This undid any benefits economic aid might have brought. Until the security situation improved, the economy could never prosper, but the security situation would never improve unless the regime changed its behavior.

The Soviet leadership was well aware of this. Acknowledging that the obstacles to growth were institutional and human, the Soviets trained tens of thousands of Afghan technicians and sent thousands of advisers to work in Afghan government agencies even as they prosecuted the war with growing intensity. This was the Soviet equivalent of what we now call “capacity building.”

In scale, this effort far surpassed anything so far attempted by NATO, but it still failed to improve Afghan governance. Soviet officials complained that their Afghan colleagues took the presence of advisers as an excuse to do even less work than before. Furthermore, the advisers were not always very good. As Gen. M.A. Gareev commented, “It wasn’t so much the fault as the misfortune of our civilian advisers that they were typical products of our cadre system, trained to be loyal executors, capable only of putting into life the line that the party had given them.” Most importantly, the Afghan regime refused to alter its brutal and fractious behavior, confident that the Soviets had little choice but to continue supporting it anyway.

The lesson here is that the barriers to development lie not in a lack of aid but

in poor human capital and weak social and political institutions. Although Western economists came rather later to this conclusion than the Soviets, most now accept it. Practice, though, continues to lag theory. Too often, those tasked with development still view it—as the Soviets initially did—as an engineering problem, a matter of building roads, factories, and schools.

The 2009 U.S. inspector general's audit report cites the renovation of a power station in Khost. After installing three new generators, the Americans handed the plant over to the Afghans, only to find that within a few months two of the three no longer worked. Similarly, the British have invested millions of dollars into digging hundreds of wells in southern Afghanistan in an attempt to "win the hearts and minds" of villagers. The new wells bypass existing institutions for the stewardship of water resources while not putting anything in their place. Afghans, not used to having unrestricted access to so much water, have responded by pumping with abandon. As a result, the water table has dropped, increasing the danger of drought. Meanwhile, according to Nipa Banerjee, nearly half of the schools in Kandahar province sit empty because there are no teachers to staff them. Yet the Canadian government is pressing ahead with plans to build even more schools. Such failures are entirely typical and predictable. They reveal how "hearts and minds" operations, undertaken to support the short-term goals of counterinsurgency, can have damaging effects on long-term development.

In some respects, Soviet advisers, despite their failings, were somewhat better than ours. Ivanov, for instance, studied Dari at the School of Oriental Languages. As he and his wife recounted over a bowl of homemade borscht, rather than living in a fortified com-

pound, he had an apartment in the Soviet-built Mikrorayon district of Kabul with his family (unthinkable for a contemporary adviser) and drove himself without escort to work every day (at least as unfathomable).

The flow of Western advisers is driven by supply rather than demand. The Afghans get what we send them, not what they ask for. Few high-ranking civil servants are willing to go to Afghanistan. As a result, the West sends young and inexperienced personnel to "mentor" much older Afghan colleagues. Few have any knowledge of Afghan languages. Valerii Ivanov told me that his Afghan contacts say that they laugh when these zealous Westerners tell them how to manage their affairs. Now President Obama is promising to send hundreds more. We can hardly imagine that, if he can actually find that many—and so far he appears to be having trouble—such a large number will really consist of highly experienced, properly qualified personnel with appropriate cultural understanding. More will not mean better.

Worse, in our efforts to fight the Taliban, we are providing Afghanistan with a massive army, a huge police force, and vast numbers of schools, hospitals, roads, and so on. All of this has to be paid for. The Afghan state cannot do so, nor will it ever be able to. When the Soviets left, Najibullah's regime survived only as long as Moscow paid the bills. The same will be true for Karzai and his successors.

Only if a state relies on taxes levied directly from the citizenry does it have to respond to those citizens' needs. It is no coincidence that rentier states that rely on oil or gas revenues or on foreign subsidies are associated with autocratic government and corruption. The Soviets could not improve governance in Afghanistan because the government relied on the army to stay in power, and

the Afghan people did not pay for the army, the Soviets did. Our efforts to improve Afghan governance may fail for exactly the same reason.

Unless there is a significant improvement in the quality of aid, President Obama is likely to be disappointed in his belief that a redoubled development effort will help bring peace to Afghanistan. The country probably needs less aid rather than more. It needs to tax its own people directly. (It scarcely does at the moment, and has little incentive to as long as the foreign checks keep flowing.) It needs a small army, not a big one, and a manageable social infrastructure, one it can afford. As happened in the past, pumping in more aid and sending in more advisers will simply reinforce the institutional barriers to progress. The pursuit of our immediate military goals is condemning Afghanistan to perpetual governmental, and thus economic, failure.

At the end of our discussion, Ivanov's son-in-law drove me back to the metro. It was snowing, not light, fluffy flakes but the kind of slush—half snow, half rain—that feels much colder than it is. To add to the gloom that evening in Moscow, I went to the cinema to watch a film about Admiral Kolchak, supreme commander of the anti-Bolshevik White government during the Russian Civil War. The West backed Kolchak too, providing him with money, weapons, and advisers. He lost—a failure more political than military in origin, caused by shockingly poor governance and an utter inability to gain popular support. It was not a good omen. ■

Paul Robinson is a professor in the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Ottawa. He is completing a book on the history of Soviet economic and technical assistance to Afghanistan.

Dumbest Idea on the Planet

Doug Feith and friends want to send civilians into war zones to do the job the military can't.

By Jeff Huber

IT WAS A POT-AND-KETTLE event when Gen. Tommy Franks called Doug Feith the “dumbest f---ing guy on the planet.” So much blood has spilled down the gutter in our weebegone war on Islamofabulism that it's easy to forget that Franks was the commander who originally snatched defeat from the jaws of victory in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

While it's moot whether Feith or Franks is the most idiotic man on earth, Feith's recent op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal* confirms that he's at least in the 99th percentile—and that he's still one of America's premier war mongrels.

As Chris Sullentrop noted in a 2004 *Slate* article, “Not a single Iraq war screw-up has gone by without someone tagging Feith ... as the guy to blame.” The cooked intelligence, the lack of postwar planning, the torture, and more were smothered with Feith's fingerprints. You'd think that the warmongers would be eager to distance themselves from such leprosy, but no. Feith is still one of their top spokesmodels.

Now Feith is pouring Quikrete into the Bananastans quagmire. His essay, “How to Win the ‘Long Hard Slog,’” touts the Obama administration's assertion that “we need to be better at civilian national-security operations.” Other voices yodeling this mantra include Lt. Gen. Stanley McChrystal, who might just be the craziest freaking guy on the planet. (Our new commander in Afghanistan reportedly eats

one meal a day and sleeps three hours a night. There's no word yet on whether he challenges teenage privates to starvation and sleep-deprivation contests the way Gen. David Petraeus engages them in push-up competitions.)

Feith professes that McChrystal's appointment “is of a piece” with the administration's desire to establish a Civilian Response Corps and reflects Defense Secretary Robert Gates's plan to “design operations on the basis of military, political, economic and cultural considerations,” as part of an effort to “transcend traditional thinking.” Gates's thinking is more traditional than transcendental: soft power has been an integral aspect of military operations since Sun Tzu and Thucydides wrote on the subject more than two millennia ago. But make no mistake. When a foreign-policy action involves shooting people and blowing things up, it's not an “assistance effort” or “education and training.” It's a war, no matter how many times bullfeather merchants like Gates and Feith say otherwise.

The purpose of the Civilian Response Corps, Feith claims, “is to line up civilians with expertise in water systems, police training, road-building, judicial administration, and other relevant fields and prepare them for deployment abroad.” Once it's operational, the CRC “will likely be useful in the fight against terrorism,” and give our government tools for fighting “piracy” and “attacks against friendly governments.”

“Historically,” Feith lectures, “when civilians have not been available for such work, it has fallen to U.S. military personnel.” Actually, such work in wartime has historically fallen to military personnel whether civilians were available or not.

World War II and other conventional conflicts featured combat along front lines behind which noncombatants could function in relative safety. The Third World wars we fight today have no front lines. Noncombatants may be fairly safe in enclaves, but combat forces are required to keep those enclaves secure. If the military can't supply sufficient forces to protect the civilians we place in combat zones, then we have to grow more soldiers or hire civilian mercenaries to do the job.

This gets at the fundamental flaw in the Civilian Response Corps concept. Fighting piracy and repelling attacks against friendly governments are combat functions. If we're going to assign them to civilians, why have a military? Noncombat functions like law enforcement, civil engineering, and administration might best be handled by folks who do those things for a living in the civilian sector, but we already have institutions that provide these kinds of personnel: the National Guard and Reserves. If we start dipping further into the private sector for manpower to fight overseas wars, we'll curb our ability to function domestically. The Chicago Police Department, for example, could

do a bang-up job of keeping the peace in Baghdad, but then who would keep the peace in Chicago?

There's a case to be made that employing part-time civilian labor is cheaper than using military personnel because Uncle Sam doesn't have to provide the same long-term benefits to civilians that he gives the troops. But that argument is too thin to stop a round of birdshot. If we can afford nuclear submarines to bomb Somali villages with cruise missiles and stealth bombers that get taken down by moisture forming on their airspeed sensors, we can pony up enough to keep sufficient numbers of doctors and truck drivers in the Guard and Reserves.

Feith is not alone in supporting this substance-inspired program. He reports

WE'LL HAVE ONE CIVILIAN AGENCY TO BLOW EVERYTHING UP, ANOTHER CIVILIAN AGENCY TO PUT IT ALL TOGETHER AGAIN.

that not only Secretary Gates but Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Michael Mullen are calling for "Greater civilian efforts to counter Taliban influence." It's their contention that "our local partners need help stopping the extremists from winning popular support in the first place."

"This makes sense," Feith says.

One reels in disbelief. Do Feith and Gates and Mullen and McChrystal and the other gee-wizards not comprehend why "civilian efforts" cannot reverse the conditions that cause the populace to prefer extremists to our local partners? They fear and loathe us for a number of reasons. Foremost is the collateral damage caused by airstrikes intended to take out head assistant evildoers. This cockamamie tactic first back-spattered on us in Desert Storm when we tried to snuff Saddam Hussein's top commanders with a bunker buster but slaughtered their families instead. It's been the bad

guys' top recruiting tool ever since. Yet Obama, ostensibly one of the smartest political figures in American history, has approved the continuation of this failed tactic and appointed a new commander—McChrystal—who specializes in conducting these kinds of raids. How dumb is that?

Congress is no smarter. It has, according to Feith, given the Civilian Response Corps bipartisan support. Some legislators, he says, wonder if the Corps should be restricted to security-related missions so that it doesn't get swamped with humanitarian projects. This portends an interesting role reversal. Humanitarian missions, like last year's airlift of aid to Georgia, consume a significant share of the U.S. military's resources. (Perhaps that's divine justice,

as the U.S. military has created so many humanitarian disasters in Iraq, Somalia, Afghanistan, and elsewhere.) If we limit the Civilian Response Corps to security-related missions, we would have civilians fighting our wars and a military that cleans up the devastation they leave behind.

But wait, we don't need the military for humanitarian missions overseas because we still have the Peace Corps to do that stuff, remember? So the Civilian Response Corps makes perfect sense. We'll have one civilian agency to blow everything up, another civilian agency to put it all together again, and the military can focus on its core mission: crafting propaganda to justify its budget.

The Civilian Response Corps reflects the moral and intellectual onanism that is accepted by the feckless mainstream media as legitimate strategy-making.

There's no reason to send either civilians or troops to Afghanistan. We can't deny extremists sanctuary there or anywhere. The only safe haven modern terrorists need to run their operations is a pocket large enough to conceal an iPhone. The Taliban or al-Qaeda might take possession of Pakistan's nuclear weapons, but so what? They're only slightly more likely to convert them into suitcase bombs than they are to develop a photon torpedo. Arms-control specialist Charles Thornton of the Center for International and Security Studies says the suitcase nuke scenario is "so highly unlikely as to be approaching fantasy." What the evil ones would most probably do if they got their hands on Pakistani nukes is die of radiation sickness. Still, if we're really worried about Pakistan's nuclear weapons, we can have our \$2 billion bombers and submarines blow them up. Then we can declare victory and bring everybody home to fix New Orleans.

Lamentably, Obama seems unable or unwilling to stop our generals and war wonks from making America the latest superpower to embalm itself on the far side of the Khyber Pass. Look on the bright side, though. Athens produced most of the art and philosophy that defined Western civilization only after it lost its decades-long war with Sparta, so maybe America can yet become Ronald Reagan's "shining city upon a hill." If so, we shouldn't have trouble finding a new generation of strategists who know it's better to charge down a hill than up one.

You don't need to be the smartest guy on the planet to figure that out. ■

Retired naval commander Jeff Huber commanded an E-2C Hawkeye aircraft squadron and was operations officer of an aircraft carrier. He is the author of Bathtub Admirals, a satire on America's rise to global dominance.

The Public Trough

Last year, over 15,000 individuals worked for organizations whose sole goal was to rip you off. No, not the mafia or Goldman Sachs, but another distinctly criminal

class—Washington lobbyists. In 2008, corporations and unions spent over \$3 billion to bribe officials who claim to work for you.

Because the federal government has so much power and money, it makes sense that private companies want to influence public policy: make friends with the bully and try to snag some stolen lunch money. But this metaphor is unfair. The bully is a lone individual without much control over the school as a whole. The federal government, by contrast, regulates nearly every aspect of the economy. It legislates health-care, controls the money supply, sets fuel standards and minimum wage laws, tells us what milk to drink and how much water should fill our toilets. Naturally, then, companies want to make sure that big bad government doesn't vote to restrict their business. They might also get some lunch money out of it.

Unsurprisingly, the areas where government has the most involvement are the areas with the most lobbyists. Healthcare crisis? Over \$3.4 billion in the last ten years spent lobbying. Banking crisis? Over \$3.5 billion. Energy crisis? Over \$2.4 billion. Those lobbyist dollars are one reason such problems persist. Instead of voting to address a crisis, politicians vote to appease a select few insiders.

The public has caught on and demands change. But Congress rarely delivers solutions. Instead, it uses problems as pretexts for restricting our liberties and aggrandizing itself. In response

to the demand for reform, the best our Congress could come up with was McCain-Feingold.

This dangerous piece of legislation is a blatant violation of the First Amendment. My anti-tax group is prohibited from purchasing ads criticizing a congressman within 60 days of an election. McCain-Feingold and the courts believe that paid speech by private citizens is somehow different from speech by the mainstream media. They refuse to acknowledge that a newspaper editorial is also paid speech, in that it costs money to produce and even has an equivalent price if a political party wants to buy the column inches. Yet the law treats the individual's speech as somehow less worthy of protection.

For the political class, a convenient consequence of McCain-Feingold has been to insulate incumbents from being voted out of office. The law has earned a nickname as the Incumbent Protection Act. That individuals are forced to declare publicly how much they donate and to whom scares many people away from funding a challenger for fear of getting on the incumbent's bad side.

The solution is not to place more restrictions on individuals and their organizations, but rather to go to the heart of the problem: Washington, D.C.

Congress should remove corruption while still honoring individual liberty. One way of doing this is by placing voluntary limits on corporations that are the recipients of government contracts. It is galling that companies can receive billion-dollar no-bid contracts, then turn

around and spend millions on lobbyists, who immediately begin to plead, "Please, sir, can I have some more, sir?"

This vicious circle is socialism for the rich. Companies no longer compete on the free market but rather seek special privileges from their men in Congress. This is disastrous for America's long-term stability. We became a great nation because we did not rely on welfare but rather worked, innovated, and produced.

What can be done? I propose mandating a clause in all federal contracts over \$1 million that requires the recipient to pledge not to lobby government or contribute to campaigns during the terms of the contract. Companies that have willingly entered the public sphere by taking taxpayer funds should not be allowed to use part of that money to secure more funds.

But this proposal is only part of the answer. While it is important to cut down on the demand for lobbyists, the supply side is even more important. Washington, D.C. has a supply of money and power that it can dole out to the highest bidder. As long as this golden goose exists, people will find ways to take advantage of it. The problem is not the abuse of power, but rather the power to abuse.

The only answer to that problem is for Congress to reduce severely the size and scope of the federal government, so that the market is allowed to operate according to the free forces of a *laissez-faire* economy. Regulations, price controls, and political cronyism only distort the economy, foster corruption, and decrease our wealth as a nation. ■

Rand Paul is an eye surgeon in Bowling Green, Kentucky. He is currently exploring a run for the U.S. Senate.

Expense Account

London's reform plan: copy Congress

By Alex Massie

MOST BRITONS have favorite moments from the Great Parliamentary Expenses Scandal of 2009. For some, it was discovering that one Member of Parliament had forwarded the cost of dredging a moat around his country house, or the spectacle of another MP putting in a claim for an ornamental duck house. For yet others, the pornographic films billed by the home secretary's husband took the biscuit.

Day after day, the *Daily Telegraph* published details of the abuse of parliamentary expenses that MP's, it became clear, had been sensible to keep hidden. Members of Gordon Brown's own cabinet refurbished second and even third homes at taxpayers' expense. Others billed nonexistent mortgage payments or claimed expenses as mundane as bath plugs and pet food.

Each revelation served to confirm the public's suspicion that Britain was governed by charlatans. MP's protested that they were "within the rules," oblivious to the fact that the people were appalled by the rules themselves.

For me, two examples summed up the scandal. When the Conservative MP Stewart Jackson was revealed to have made a £300 claim for maintenance of his swimming pool, he responded, "The pool came with the house and I needed to know how to run it. Once I was shown that one time, there were no more claims. I take care of the pool myself. I believe this represents 'value for money' for the taxpayer."

Then, confirming the parliamentarians' sense of entitlement, when a

Labour MP's attempt to bill taxpayers for the cost of a cot for his infant was—surprisingly in view of what was permitted—refused, he appealed: "I object to your decision not to reimburse me for the costs of purchasing a baby's cot for use in my London home. ... Perhaps you might write to me explaining where my son should sleep next time he visits me in London?"

The affair has ended dozens of careers, including that of Michael Martin, the first speaker of the House of Commons to be forced from office in 300 years. For a few days, it looked as though the prime minister himself would step down.

In the end, Brown survived. His party won just 15 percent of the vote in the recent European parliament elections, and if Labour were as ruthless in dealing with damaged leaders as the Tories have been, Brown would have been unceremoniously defenestrated. As it is, the wounded prime minister now limps, crippled, toward electoral disaster next year.

Brown's weakness—only the vacillation of senior cabinet ministers preserved his position—has exacerbated the sense that Something Must Be Done. While the public mood is so sour that a proposal to garrison parliamentarians in a prison ship moored on the Thames would win widespread support, the media has been just as quick to embrace any idea that would supposedly "transform" British politics.

Terrified by looming electoral catastrophe, the Left has rediscovered its enthusiasm for voting reform. The introduction of proportional representation,

first considered during the long years of Tory ascendancy—but subsequently forgotten in the aftermath of Labour's landslide victory in 1997—has been excavated and repainted as means by which British politics can be "renewed."

Brown has proposed a referendum on electoral reform, hoping that this will assuage public anger. Abandoning the first-past-the-post principle might benefit the Labour Party. But it would frustrate the accountability its enthusiasts claim to support. Whatever its other merits, proportional representation would increase the power of political parties at the expense of the electorate, making the formation of a government subject to backroom deals in the aftermath of elections, which would do little more than set the parameters for negotiations.

Voting reform will likely be stillborn, so pundits are looking to the U.S. for answers. If only, they suggest, British politics were more like the American system, this would be a better governed country. Everything from a written constitution to fixed-term parliaments and a fully elected upper chamber has been put forward. That such changes would constitute a political earthquake is precisely the point for campaigners who look at the American political landscape and see a glorious revolution Britain never had.

Britons pine for 18th-century parliamentarians of the caliber of Pitt the Younger, Edmund Burke, William Wilberforce, and Charles Lane Fox. Men of principle and independent

temper, capable of wrestling with great problems and championing great causes. But we demand that they abide by 21st-century standards of “accountability,” forever answerable to a public that despises them and likes nothing better than voicing its sense of chippy, self-righteous indignation. Whereas American political culture is essentially optimistic, British politics is elementally pessimistic. The public wants great men but doesn’t believe they exist. The spirit of “Yes We Can” and the ritualistic invocations of “hope” and “change” would seem absurd if transferred to British politics.

This political malaise signals something else, too: the sense that British politics has become dismally small. Where once the prestige of the House of Commons matched the gothic splendor of the palace of Westminster, now the building’s history offers a sardonic counterpoint to the diminished importance of its business and the caliber of the tiny politicians debating in a chamber once graced by Disraeli, Gladstone, and Churchill. The combination of a retreat from empire and the accretion of power at the European parliament and commission has diminished Britain and, consequently, British politics.

This is one explanation for why such a small scandal—at least by international standards—should have captured the public’s imagination. Once upon a time, this would all have been too trivial to matter; once upon a time, too, the public had greater faith in the men it sent to Parliament.

Thomas Macaulay was right when he said, “We know no spectacle so ridiculous as the British public in one of its periodical fits of morality.” In truth, Britain has not enjoyed such a hue and cry since the death of Princess Diana in 1997. Then the royal family was the subject of the people’s wrath, and a fresh-faced prime minister named Tony Blair

seemed in touch with the public mood. Twelve years on, an exhausted Labour government led by Blair’s successor stands shamefaced in the dock. Promises of minor reforms helped the Windsors survive the storm occasioned by the mawkish reaction to Diana’s death, but mostly the monarchy’s rehabilitation rested on a strategy of masterful inactivity. Parliament seems determined to ignore that lesson.

Rather, to invoke a phrase much in vogue, would-be reformers insist that this is not a crisis to be wasted. That their proposals would render British politics unrecognizable is precisely the point; that they would do little to improve the reputation of Parliament of no consequence.

Americans could be forgiven for viewing many of the so-called solutions with skepticism. And no wonder, since, if implemented, they would organize British politics around the utopian fantasy of life in “The West Wing.”

American politics is so much sexier than our drab squabbles between gray men in even grayer suits. The delicious drawn-out drama of an American presidential election is catnip for the British political class. Arguing in favor of adopting the American primary system, the *Times* of London editorialized, “The current way of choosing MPs rewards those who can get a small group of people to attach a party label to them. Mediocrity and even misconduct go unpunished. Independence from the party whip is of little value. And the results are highly visible: a Parliament in which there are too many time-servers, too many party hacks and too great a disparity in talent between top and bottom.”

All of this may be true—but it might equally be said of the House of Representatives. Nobody possessing even a passing acquaintance with the U.S. Congress could plausibly claim that a

system that produces politicians like John Murtha, Maxine Walters, and Duke Cunningham is any guarantee of public probity, far less that it ensures the triumph of sound men and women of sturdy, independent mind. Nor does turnout in most primary elections suggest that this is the best way to reconnect politics with the people.

Still, there’s no quirk of the American political system that can’t, we are told, be introduced to the United Kingdom. David Lammy, notionally one of the brighter breed of Labour MP’s, endorsed the idea of installing a recall mechanism for MP’s. Apparently enthusiasts for reform have never heard of California.

All of these ideas—and others such as electing the House of Lords—suffer from the misapprehension that systems matter more than people. Indeed, an elected upper chamber would increase the chance of replicating the congressional gridlock that so infuriates American voters while also increasing the power of political parties by stripping the Lords of the aloofness from the daily partisan grind that is its greatest strength.

Gordon Brown avows that it is time to end the “gentlemen’s club” arrangement whereby MP’s write their own rules and police their own conduct—to which the only sensible response is that if Parliament were a gentlemen’s club, we would not be in these straits. Not for the first time, the prime minister has grasped the wrong end of the stick.

Voters have a simple message for politicians: do your jobs—honestly and modestly. Parliament and pundits, however, prefer to concentrate on changing systems rather than people. They should be very careful what they wish for, lest they actually receive it. ■

Alex Massie is a former Washington correspondent for The Scotsman. He blogs for The Spectator.

One-Sided COIN

The military-industrial complex surges Washington.

By Kelley Beaucar Vlahos

YOU KNOW IT'S NOT going to be a typical Washington think-tank event when, upon entering the gilded doors of the Willard InterContinental Hotel, you are greeted by a peppy female soldier in an Army service uniform bedecked with medals. "Welcome, are you here for CNAS?"

For the Center for a New American Security, the June 11 annual meeting was about doing things big—broadcasting to the swelling Washington national-security establishment that CNAS is a major player; that there is but a sliver of daylight between its civilian-policy mission and that of the U.S. military. Both are working symbiotically to make their vision the only remedy for the young Obama administration's foreign-policy challenges.

Here was a heady mix of Army brass, Navy officers in their starched whites, and soldiers in digital camo networking among the dark suits and smart skirts of the civilian elite. Defense contractors, lobbyists, analysts, journalists, administration reps, Hill staff—1,400 of the "best and brightest," seeing and being seen.

Gen. David Petraeus—no one could have better sanctified this event save Obama himself—stepped to the dais. He called CNAS "a true force." For him, this is a good thing. Just two years ago, this predominately Democratic crowd was all about getting out of Iraq (albeit "wisely"). Then, seeking to establish muscular national-security credentials ahead of the presidential election, CNAS's founders Michele Flournoy and Kurt Campbell made the savvy decision to position Petraeus's expanding counterinsurgency (COIN) ideal in their own evolving agenda.

It was a marriage of convenience. Petraeus's patrons in the Republican Party were on the way out, and Democrats were looking to retool their neoliberal interventionism, latent since the Clinton administration, into a sort of Counterinsurgency 2.0. The result was on full display as Petraeus broke down current operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan: a "whole of government" or "full spectrum" approach, led by the U.S. military, requiring untold financial resources, more weapons in theater, and more boots on the ground to "protect populations," turn around institutions, and train security forces. As one panelist said, "a long-term commitment" to the region.

Nods of approval. A standing ovation. Why not? For every soul in the room who truly believes this is the "pragmatic and principled approach," there was surely another for whom the Long War means guaranteed employment, flush contracts, justified research, more trips to Capitol Hill. A reason for being.

In June 2007, presidential candidate Hillary Clinton stood on the same platform, delivering the keynote speech at CNAS's glittering launch. There the center planted its first marker and was unofficially identified as Clinton's national security team in waiting.

She spoke about the "need to be both internationalist and realistic." She contemplated the idea of a "no-fly zone" over Darfur and a post-Bush withdrawal from Iraq. Meanwhile, panel discussions found the new generation of "hot policy wonks" of the Democratic persuasion extolling the merits of "international power management" and global "listen-

ing tours" in a new (Democratic) administration.

But that was all so 2007, before it was accepted by these Clintonian Democrats and the Washington foreign-policy establishment writ large that the surge strategy promoted by the neoconservatives was a success. It was discovered that the narrative could easily be co-opted, along with the brand of its leading man, General Petraeus, and nearly all of his so-called brain trust, now fellows, advisers, and speakers at CNAS events.

At the top is retired Lt. Col. John A. Nagl, who served in the Gulf War and Iraq before working directly for Donald Rumsfeld at the Pentagon. As co-author of the *Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual* in 2006 (aka the Petraeus Doctrine), he has, since February, indulged his role as president and chief COIN pusher at CNAS with almost religious zeal.

Gentle profiles describe him as a "guru" and a "scholar." Others say Nagl is self-promoting and ambitious, leaving the military in 2008 because he felt he could ride into a lofty position in a Democratic administration. Above all, he is an Oxford-educated blunt instrument, hammering away about the glories of COIN. He writes extensively about extremist nonstate threats and the U.S. obligation to fight them. His vision of irregular warfare goes well beyond the traditional American perception of national defense, but it jibes with current conventional wisdom.

"The soldiers who will win these wars require an ability not just to dominate

land operations, but to change entire societies,” he wrote in 2006. “Decisive results in the twenty-first century will come not when we wipe a piece of land clean of enemy forces, but when we protect its people and allow them to control their territory in a manner consistent with the norms of the civilized world. Thus victory in Iraq and Afghanistan will come when those nations enjoy governments that meet the basic needs and garner the support of all of their peoples.”

Then there’s the more nuanced but equally ubiquitous David Kilcullen, a former Australian military officer who worked for Condi Rice before advising Petraeus in Iraq. He and Sarah Sewall, a former Clinton official who wrote the introduction to the much-ballyhooed University of Chicago Press edition of the counterinsurgency field manual, are among CNAS’s national-security advisers. Kilcullen also helped to write the 2009 *U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide*.

CNAS not only took Clinton’s loss in stride, it gauged the post-Bush zeitgeist correctly. Flournoy was scooped up for President-elect Obama’s transition team. She later left CNAS for Doug Feith’s old position at the Pentagon. Fellow co-founder Kurt Campbell should soon be confirmed as assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs.

Earlier in June, Price Floyd, the group’s director of external affairs, became principal deputy assistant secretary for public affairs at the Department of Defense. CNAS senior vice president and director of studies James N. Miller left to work as deputy undersecretary of defense for policy. Colin Kahl is now deputy assistant secretary of defense for the Middle East, while former fellow Shawn Brimley is a special advisor to Flournoy. Vikram Singh serves as special adviser to Flournoy for Afghanistan-Pakistan. Another former fellow, Eric Pierce, is now deputy chief

for legislative affairs at DoD, and CNAS researcher Alice Hunt has become Flournoy’s special assistant.

Over at the State Department, Campbell joins former CNAS senior fellow Derek Chollet, now deputy director for policy planning, and former CNAS CFO Nate Tibbitts, who heads national security for the White House Office of Presidential Personnel.

While CNAS influences policy from the inside, filling the gaps back at its Pennsylvania Avenue offices has not been difficult. As Obama leans further on the military to resolve challenges overseas, the group has accordingly become top heavy with active-duty and retired military “COINdinistas.” During the annual meeting, it was announced that Nathaniel Fick, a 32-year-old Marine Corps veteran who wrote *One Bullet Away: The Making of a Marine Corps Officer*, would take Campbell’s place as CNAS’s chief executive officer.

He joins Nagl in leading a hatch of “new generation” war wonks, ranging from active-duty fellows like Lt. Col. Jim Crider and veterans like retired Army Capt. Andrew Exum—whose blog, *Abu Muqawama*, is the go-to for the COIN set—to court scribes like Tom Ricks, whose panegyrics to Petraeus and Gen. Raymond Odierno transformed him from *Washington Post* war correspondent to war wonk and COIN operator.

COIN today is the realm of CNAS, as if Frederick Kagan and AEI had never existed. But it won’t do to deny the family resemblance says retired Army Col. Douglas Macgregor: “You will hear the same things at the Center for a New American Security as you will at the American Enterprise Institute. Nation-building at gunpoint, democracy at gunpoint. What’s the difference?”

Adherents of the old neoconservative vision and these new security policy-makers all “drank the Kool-Aid,” said Boston University Professor Andrew

Bacevich, the only real dissenter invited to speak on June 11. Both groups, he added, see war as “a perpetual condition,” employing massive firepower and boots on the ground, draining “billions, if not trillions of dollars,” in pursuit of goals based on skewed assumptions about American interests abroad.

“Would it not be best to reconsider the alternatives and not continue on this path?” Bacevich asked. To which Exum retorted, “What is the alternative?”

In Counterinsurgency 2.0, the Democrats and their military partners now emphasize a “population-centric” over an “enemy-centric” approach, rebooting the old “clear, hold, and build” by adding a “civilian surge” and a ramped-up humanitarian mission. The goal for Afghanistan is to flood the country with Foreign Service officers, diplomats, and aid workers to fight corruption and rebuild institutions. The military serves to protect populations, “open up space” for democracy, and eventually marginalize the enemy.

So far it’s not happening that way. The Pentagon has maintained a lead on operations, and according to reports, there just aren’t enough State Department officials to make a dent in Kabul, so DoD is planning to take up the slack by directing capable Reserve officers (and probably private contractors) toward the civilian component.

Many have been left wondering what happened to Obama’s promise to reorient foreign policy so that it is not so military-centric and whether he will end up authorizing new forces beyond the 68,000 U.S. troops expected in Afghanistan by the end of the year.

“We’ve basically turned our foreign policy over to the military,” fumed one national-security analyst from a competing Washington think tank who did not want to be named. “Every problem has a military solution. Every problem is a nail because we have a hammer. I think you’re starting to see that at CNAS.”

Open criticism of CNAS is rare because the COINdinistas are so snug in the Beltway bosom. While Republican warhawks love that CNAS speaks their language, antiwar liberals and others who chafe against the Long War find themselves derided.

Aside from Celeste Ward's May 17 piece in the *Washington Post*, "The Pentagon's Obsession with Counterinsurgency," there are just a handful of experts who dare to confront the CNAS crowd regularly—at their professional peril. U.S. Army Col. Gian Gentile, a West Point history professor and Iraq War veteran, is one, having dusted it up more than a few times with Nagl, Exum, and others. He abhors the "groupthink" that has created a surge narrative to fit the political agenda and bristles at the idea of COIN taking over the entire ethos of the Army.

"[Nagl] is so cocksure of the efficacy of Army combat power that he believes it will have the ability not only to dominate land warfare in general but also to 'change entire societies'. ... We are organizing ourselves around the principle of nation-building rather than fighting," Gentile wrote in a counterpoint to Nagl's "Let's Win the Wars We're In" for the latest issue of *Joint Force Quarterly*. "In this sense, the caricature of Nagl as a 'crusader' seems correct."

But CNAS clearly has the rest spooked. Several interviewees for this story asked that their names be left out, fearing that their frank opinions about the group would be used against them. Washington is a small town, and many wonks and analysts in the defense community are looking for work. Consider Gen. David McKiernan, fired from his job as commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan by Defense Secretary Bob Gates and immediately replaced by Lt. Gen. Stanley McChrystal, a friend of Petraeus and, according to Exum, an "automatic starter in anyone's lineup."

Despite his connections with abuse allegations at the Iraqi interrogation facility he oversaw in 2006, McChrystal is lauded for his "forward thinking" on irregular warfare.

He certainly hit all the right Counterinsurgency 2.0 notes during his confirmation hearings in June, repeating the mantra that "population-centric" approaches are the key to prevailing in Afghanistan. "Those remarks could have been given by a CNAS person," said the think-tank source. "I was stunned." A day later, CNAS—led by Kilcullen, Exum, and Fick—released its report, "Triage: the Next Twelve Months in Afghanistan and Pakistan." The single most important task facing the U.S. and its allies over the near term? "Protecting the population."

Some CNAS opponents emphasize its Democratic background. Once belittled for their perceived shortcomings in defense matters, these liberals have birthed a hybrid of politics and military doctrine much more ambitious than anticipated even a year ago. Combine that with the blessings bestowed by Obama, Secretary of State Clinton, and Defense Secretary Gates in the form of

numerous key administration appointments, and you have a superior vehicle for what senior defense analyst Celeste Ward calls an "unquestioned orthodoxy."

The June event captured the group's transcendence over partisanship. The inclusion of heavyweights like Petraeus, flanked by a host of young war scholars, not only announced its preeminence among Washington's policymaking elite but confirmed the increasing deference to the military on the critical national-security issues of our day.

But there is one major, potentially devastating pitfall: COIN has yet to be fully tested or even legitimated by any success outside of the surge narrative. So while one well-connected think tank gets top billing in Washington, the people of Iraq and Afghanistan—as well as the American men and women serving dutifully there—remain "long-term" guinea pigs. If it doesn't work, an office on Pennsylvania Avenue might shut, but the implications for the world could be catastrophic. ■

Kelley Beaucar Vlahos is a Washington, D.C.-based freelance reporter.

Sweetness & Spite

The forgotten pleasures of light verse

By R.J. Stove

IT IS ALWAYS SAD when a valuable artist perishes. It is sadder still when a valuable art form perishes. It is saddest of all when a valuable art form did not need to perish, but was simply hounded to the culture's periphery by a deliberate, malicious process of what Fred Reed has called "enstupitation."

One art form belonging firmly to this last group is light verse. Today it is a drab, tiny creature, which, insofar as the major

media tend it at all, survives more in Britain than in the States. Things were very different in the two decades following World War II. Back then, among Americans, light verse flourished. It owed part of its exuberant health to the enlightened attitude of *New Yorker* editor Harold Ross, who had an admirable policy of paying substantially more for light-verse contributions than for conventional free-verse bromides. But *The New*

Yorker was not light verse's only home. The *New York Herald Tribune*, *Life*, and the *Saturday Evening Post* all found abundant room for it. As critic William H. Pritchard observed, "Books by [light verse's] practitioners were reviewed in *The New York Times Book Review*, the general sense being that, in the age of [T.S.] Eliot and Wallace Stevens, it was an excellent alternative to high modernism." The practitioners themselves won Pulitzers and honorary doctorates. They could even earn a middle-class living by producing the stuff.

There was E.B. White, a dab hand at such confections, although even in light verse's heyday White remained better known for his children's literature (*Charlotte's Web*, *Stuart Little*) and for his periodically acrid *New Yorker* cartoon captions. (Doting mother to fractious infant: "It's broccoli, dear." Fractious infant: "I say it's spinach, and I say the hell with it.") There was Ogden Nash, with his preposterously ingenious line endings: who else would have dared to emphasize that "calliope," properly pronounced, rhymes with "diaper"? There was Morris Bishop, professor of Romance Languages at Cornell, not to mention biographer of Petrarch, Pascal, La Rochefoucauld, and Samuel de Champlain. Bishop excelled above all at mimicry, as in his swipe at graffiti-carving tourists, which begins with a straight quote from Shelley's "Ozymandias" but finishes:

And on the pedestal these words appear:
'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings.
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!
Also the names of Emory P. Gray, Mr.
and Mrs. Dukes, and Oscar Baer
Of 17 West Fourth St., Oyster Bay.

Representing postwar light verse's Little League was the young John Updike,

whose recent obituarists largely ignored his poems yet who once admitted, "As a boy I wanted to be a cartoonist. Light verse ... seemed a kind of cartooning with words, and through light verse I first found my way into print." Far too much of Updike's seriously intended poetry—the verse in which he took most pride—bore the unprepossessing paw-prints of Walt Whitman, whom P.J. O'Rourke accurately but unavailingly called "a self-obsessed ratchet-jaw with an ear like a tin cookie sheet." Happily, every technical virtue that Updike forgot in his serious efforts, he remembered in his light ones. Witty rhymes, as in a meditation on, of all topics, Venus's magnetic field: "Stern Mars is cold, Uranus gassy, / And Saturn hopelessly déclassé"; equally amusing enjambments across lines of otherwise strict meter: "Just turned nineteen, a nicely molded lad, / I said goodbye to Sis and Mother; Dad / Drove me to Wisconsin ..."; lampoons that showed how well he knew the literary canon, as when newspaper reports of a pampered Iranian oil magnate reminded him of Coleridge:

In Naishapur did Khaibar Khan
With stately ease exclaim 'Kerchoo!'
And Standard Oil dispatched its man
With bales of linen to Iran
To minister unto his flu...

By general consent at the time, though, the doyenne of light versifiers in this period was not Updike or Nash or Bishop or White but Phyllis McGinley. A straw poll recently taken among half a dozen of my most bookish colleagues revealed that not a single respondent under the age of 50 had even heard of her. Seldom has any once vast reputation been so completely dissolved. Who now would imagine that in 1965 such was her renown that she broke bread with LBJ and appeared on the cover of *Time*?

Miss McGinley actually disliked the rubric "light verse," preferring to call her

manner "poetry of wit." She regarded herself as belonging to the tradition of 17th-century England's so-called Cavalier Poets—Robert Herrick, Richard Lovelace, Edmund Waller, and John Suckling, to name a handful—who eschewed the self-conscious, syntax-wrecking convolutions of John Donne and his followers in favor of a sweet urbanity. Something of this urbanity characterizes McGinley's own oeuvre. Yet a more immediate influence on it is that of her coreligionist Hilaire Belloc (whose poems Jonathan Chaves eulogized in *TAC*'s July 19, 2004 issue). Indeed, one could almost argue that the entire history of modern light verse comprises a series of footnotes to Belloc. When McGinley laments the dullness of modern American lodgings, she does so by invoking Belloc's "Do you remember an inn, Miranda?"

Her theological allegiance—through which, on occasion, she subjected Calvin and John Knox to gentle raillery—will do nothing to dispel the widespread half-truth that America's only major modern writers have been Catholics or Jews. Orwell, a lifelong foe of Catholicism, nevertheless maintained that Catholics produced the best comic writing because they had "a serious purpose and a noticeable willingness to hit below the belt." Certainly, Belloc did so at times, as did his literary descendant Roy Campbell, who numbered among his plentiful aversions Elizabeth I's regime ("Cecil's Ogpu") and Spain's bespectacled prime minister Manuel Azaña ("Four-eyed Janus ... the sodomites are on your side"). But where Belloc and Campbell wielded bludgeons, McGinley preferred a stiletto. Where they bellowed, she teased.

She adopted, without necessarily being aware of doing so, William Carlos Williams's doctrine: "No ideas but in things." Suburbia awoke in her a passionate instinct for what a 19th-century Anglican hymnodist had called "the daily round, the common task":

Mankind is better off with trifles:
With Band-Aid rather than the Bomb,
With safety match than safety rifles.
Let the earth fall or the earth spin!
A brave new world might well begin
With no invention
Worth the mention
Save paper towels and aspirin.

Dwight Macdonald spent all too much of the 1950s bemoaning Midcult and Masscult, yet from the vantage point of 2009, the 1950s were the great age of almost universal Highcult. Intelligent American artists then enjoyed genuine popularity, as they never afterward did. During the *Pax Eisenhoweriana*, Princeton and Petticoat Junction spoke, to a surprising extent, the same tongue. McGinley's collections of verse had an average sales figure of 60,000 copies. Not for her the usual appurtenances of poets today: the vanity presses, the passive-aggressive demands for taxpayer funding.

For some peevish spirits—notably Comrade Betty Friedan, who treated her to special invective (a badge of honor in itself)—McGinley just was not dismal enough. Domesticity, that “concentration camp” of Ugly Betty's feverish imaginings, seemed to McGinley something like heaven:

Less woman, I suspect, than mouse,
To alter fate I would not bother.
I like my plain suburban house.
I like my children and their father. ...
In fact, I find it hard to see
Exactly what I should disparage.
I like my nationality,
I like my relatives-by-marriage.
Trapped, tricked, enslaved, but
lacking sense
To enter in the conflict single,
I wear my chains like ornaments,
Convinced they make a charming jingle.

Then, at the very moment when you have McGinley pegged for a mere joke-smith, she can turn around and overwhelm you with her tenderness, as in

this tribute to her adolescent daughter:

Thirteen's no age at all. Thirteen is
nothing.
It is not wit, or powder on the face,
Or Wednesday matinée, or misses'
clothing,
Or intellect, or grace ...
Thirteen keeps diaries and tropical fish
(A month, at most); scorns jump-
ropes in the spring;
Could not, would fortune grant it,
name its wish;
Wants nothing, everything;
Has secrets from itself, friends it
despises;
Admits none to the terrors that it feels;
Own half a hundred masks but no
disguises;
And walks upon its heels.
Thirteen's anomalous—not that, not
this:
Not folded bud, or wave that laps a
shore,
Or moth proverbial from the chrysalis.
Is the one age defeats the metaphor.
Is not a town, like childhood, strongly
walled
But easily surrounded, in no city.
Nor, quitted once, can it be quite
recalled—
Not even with pity.

Note the assurance with which she makes the shortest lines bear even greater emotional weight than the iambic pentameters. Having demonstrated her brilliance at such exigent medieval French verse genres as the ballade, the rondeau, and the villanelle, she told *The American Scholar* in 1965, “Discipline is the groundwork of all art. The abstract painter has to know first how to draw, the symbolist to write ordinary lines. And the poet, no matter how soon he intends to throw overboard his formalism, has first to be capable of a correctly rhymed and metered stanza.”

A recent *New York Times* profile made the depressing allegation that McGinley in

her last years became friendly with the papiac poltroon Nelson Rockefeller and followed his counsel even to the extent of supporting abortion. One hopes these allegations are false. But even if true, they did her no worldly good. Apologists for the 1960s Confessional Poets had only contempt for her poised, supple idiom. Clive James, himself an accomplished bard, referred with understandable tetchiness in a 1977 essay for London's *New Statesman* to the Confessional crew as being characterized by “stringy hair, open-necked shirts, non-rhyming sonnets that multiplied like bacilli, and nervous breakdowns.” The Confessional Poets, with Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, and John Berryman constituting their trinitarian godhead, turned poetry into that branch of psychobabble that it has mostly been ever since. Imitating McGinley or her rivals requires skill, not to mention a functioning auditory nerve. Imitating Plath's “Thalidomide” or Sexton's “Menstruation at Forty” requires no discernible talent save the purest, most unembarrassable exhibitionism: any number can play. Such exhibitionism signified Whitman's posthumous triumph. By extension, it also showed the decline of any artistic medium that—like light verse—prides itself on knowing its architectural limits and on acknowledging (although seldom slavishly copying) established literary traditions.

Largely forgotten, McGinley died in 1978, a month before her 73rd birthday. Perhaps on her gravestone someone should have carved the credo of Dorothy Parker, whom in her steely metrical intelligence she so much resembled:

A little humor leavens the lump,
surely, but it does more than that. It keeps you, from your respect for the humor of others, from making a dull jackass of yourself. Humor, imagination, and manners are pretty fairly interchangeably interwoven. ■

R.J. Stove lives in Melbourne, Australia.

Arts & Letters

BOOKS

[*Spies: The Rise and Fall of the KGB in America*, John Earl Haynes, Harvey Klehr, and Alexander Vassiliev, Yale University Press, 704 pages]

[*Alger Hiss and the Battle for History*, Susan Jacoby, Yale University Press, 272 pages]

Seeing Reds

By Justin Raimondo

SHORTLY AFTER Lawrence Duggan, a top State Department official, was questioned by the FBI about his involvement in espionage against the U.S. on behalf of the Soviet Union, he jumped from the 16th floor of a New York City office building. The winter of 1948 was a particularly harsh one, as the first frigid blasts of the Cold War whipped across the political landscape, but not as harsh as the response of Sen. Karl Mundt. Asked if, in light of Duggan's suicide, when the House Committee on Un-American Activities would name other suspected Soviet agents, the senator replied, "We'll name them as they jump out of windows."

The storm of self-righteousness that broke over the waspish Mundt's head put the Furies to shame. With one voice, the liberal establishment—Eleanor Roosevelt; former undersecretary of state, Sumner Welles; Archibald MacLeish, poet-laureate of the New Deal; and lib-

eral attack-dogs Drew Pearson and Edward R. Murrow—rose up and barked: Libel! Slander! Red-baiting!

As John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr point out in *Spies: The Rise and Fall of the KGB in America*, no less a liberal icon than Arthur Schlesinger Jr. denounced a book for characterizing Duggan as a KGB source, accusing the author of "blackening the name of a man whom many knew as an able public servant."

But the collapse of the Soviet empire has meant the implosion of the liberal delusion that McCarthyism was a mean-spirited campaign of lies and smears based entirely on the ambition and alcohol-fueled paranoia of one flawed human being, whose name has become synonymous with witch-hunting. Schlesinger and his ideological confrères have had the rug pulled out from under them by the gradual release of the KGB's files, and the *coup de grâce* has been delivered by the publication of *Spies*, which cites definitive evidence from the Soviet archives that not only nails Duggan as a Soviet agent, but also closes the case of the most celebrated Soviet fifth columnist of all, Alger Hiss.

Hiss didn't jump out of a window. Quite the contrary. He fought the accusation that he was a key cog in the Soviet espionage apparatus in Washington, maintaining his innocence until the end. He and his supporters built a cult around his alleged victimhood at the hands of the evil McCarthyites that dwindled in number, if not in fanatic devotion, as evidence of his guilt began to trickle in after the Soviet collapse. The trickle has turned into a torrent as

the flow of released KGB and GRU (Soviet military intelligence) documents has overwhelmed the last wall of resistance put up by Hiss's defenders. Alexander Vassiliev, a former KGB officer who managed to get his hands on previously unavailable correspondence between Moscow and its agents in America, has pulled the plug on the Hiss sect. The head of Soviet espionage in this country, in a document that cites the KGB's failures and lists agents imperiled by the "traitor" Whittaker Chambers, named names, not just code names.

Hiss is at the top of a long list, with Harry Dexter White, an assistant Treasury secretary; Laughlin Currie, a top aide to FDR and head of the Foreign Economic Administration in wartime Washington; and at least a dozen others with similar credentials, backgrounds, and political views: young, educated scions of WASPy Brahmin families. Schooled at Ivy League colleges and brought up in a world of privilege and "social concerns," these types flocked to Washington in the wake of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's electoral victory, energized by their zeal to remake America. These members of some of America's wealthiest families—such as Michael Straight of New York's prominent Whitneys, owners of *The New Republic*—were part of the underground Communist Party group within the Roosevelt administration that did not hesitate to spy for the KGB or GRU simply because, as a reviewer in *The Nation* put it,

Very few of those described as 'traitors' by Haynes and Klehr saw their actions as in any way inimical to

the interests of the United States. (Vassiliev made this point repeatedly during the 2003 trial.) They may, of course, have simply been 'in denial,' but it is striking how often, in the relatively small fraction of Vassiliev's 1,115 pages of notes included in *Spies*, that even Americans like Julius Rosenberg, who engaged in the witting supply of classified information under the acknowledged direction of agents of a foreign power—a better definition of 'spy' than any you will find in this book—were nonetheless careful to make clear their primary loyalty to the United States.

How little things change. This is precisely what Larry Franklin, the Pentagon's top Iran analyst, said in his own defense when he was caught turning over vital secrets to Israeli officials via AIPAC employees Steve Rosen and Keith Weissman. Far from considering himself a traitor, he fancied himself a patriot for trying to advance the special relationship between the two countries. Convinced that American policymakers weren't responding to the alleged threat from Iran decisively enough, he took it upon himself to supply the Israelis with closely held intelligence about al-Qaeda and U.S. troop movements in Iraq because he considered American and Israeli interests to be the same.

This also describes the mindset of Rosen and Weissman, who had the charges against them dropped after years of legal delaying tactics and an orchestrated campaign by the Israel lobby. Of course, the accusation of McCarthyism was pinned on the Justice Department for daring to indict them along with Franklin, and yet, as we can see in the pages of *Spies*, "Tail-Gunner Joe" was right. The U.S. government, during the war years particularly, was inundated with Communists who were turning over our secrets to the Soviets as fast as they could glean them.

Soviet penetration of every aspect of American political and social life was the KGB's goal, and during what Eugene

Lyons called the "red decade" of the 1930s, this was incredibly easy: the ideological zeitgeist was not only conducive but welcoming. The supposed identity of U.S. and Soviet interests was even easier to justify during the war years, when "Uncle Joe" Stalin was America's best friend (and Britain's), and Lend-Lease Act dollars were pouring into the effort to save the "workers' fatherland."

The so-called Popular Front strategy of the Communist Party was very successful, involving as it did a grand coalition with New Deal liberals and fellow traveling intellectuals—such as the crews at *The New Republic* and *The Nation*—of which the Communists were the spearhead. In the run up to World War II and during the conflict, the Communists made up the left wing of the Rooseveltian revolutionaries, who sought, as Archibald MacLeish put it, to "remake America," a task quite suited to the Communists' taste. Yet there was no sense that this was an alien conspiracy, or at least a great effort was made to make it seem "patriotic" to be under the discipline of the Communist Party. Communism, enunciated CP leaders, is "20th century Americanism." Little did anyone of consequence then suspect that these 20th-century "Americanists" were rifling through our secrets and sending them off to Moscow.

The sheer scope of Soviet covert operations in the U.S. and their undoubted success is chronicled in painstaking detail by Haynes and Klehr. From the collection of scientific and technical data—including the making of the nuclear bomb—to vital political and inside information about the internal deliberations of the U.S. government on matters of interest to Moscow, the Red fifth column infiltrated.

Journalism was a prime target. There were, of course, plenty of party-liners, but in *Spies* we are presented with evidence that a substantial Communist cadre in the Fourth Estate reported to their KGB handlers and, in certain cases, acted as sources and conduits for sensitive material.

George Seldes and Bruce Minton, co-publishers of the left-wing newsletter *In Fact*—who delighted in smearing anti-war conservatives—were both Soviet agents, the latter "deeply embedded in the Communist underground and one of its links to the KGB." Another journalist crusader was John Spivak, who made a career out of linking America First to the Nazis after receiving orders directly from the KGB's chief officer in the U.S., Jacob Golos. After the invasion of the Soviet Union by Hitler's troops, hacks like Seldes and Spivak, along with John Roy Carlson, were used to smear the antiwar movement as the "Nazi transmission belt," as one anti-isolationist tract put it.

The case of Walter Lippmann, the socialist turned consummate insider, is more complex: the KGB approached him through his secretary, Mary Price, who went through his papers and sent photocopies of his correspondence to her KGB handler. Ernest Hemingway is characterized by the authors as the "dilettante spy," whose contacts with Soviet agent Harry Dexter White and other brushes with the Communist apparatus in the U.S. and abroad—he went to Spain during the civil war and was close to the International Brigades—made the Soviets think he could be useful. Yet Hemingway, although vaguely sympathetic and apparently enamoured of the whole idea of espionage, never did anything for the KGB, and his contacts with them were sporadic.

The Soviets also penetrated the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the precursor to the CIA, to an "astounding degree," with several top agents reporting directly to Moscow. Newly documented cases of KGB collaboration number about a dozen. Grouped around these conscious agents were the sources who, unknowingly or otherwise, fed them vital information that was then piped to Moscow. Strongholds were apparently the Russian, Spanish, Balkan, Hungarian, and Latin American sections of the Research and Analysis department. In terms of operational units, the Reds were also a significant

factor in the Japanese, Spanish, Hungarian, Korean, Italian, Indonesian, and German sections. Thrown together haphazardly and with great speed during the war, the OSS was particularly prone to Soviet infiltration. Its first chief, William Donovan, once remarked, "I'd put Stalin on the OSS payroll if I thought it would help us defeat Hitler." Donovan felt he was making use of the Communists in his ranks, but in the long run they made better use of him.

The Soviets further succeeded in placing a number of agents as congressional staff members, and in Rep. Sam Dickstein (D-N.Y.), who according to Allen Weinstein's *The Haunted Wood* was paid \$1,250 a month by the Soviets, they had an actual member of Congress. It was Dickstein who lorded it over the House's Special Committee on Un-American Activities, the precursor to HUAC, and embarked on a witchhunt against any organization or individual who dared speak out against U.S. intervention abroad, labeling them Nazis, fascists, and saboteurs. Long before McCarthy, there was Dickstein, who "exaggerated the extremist threat far beyond its small size, claiming that the German American Bund had two hundred thousand armed men who were ready to don their brown uniforms and overthrow the government." He coerced and abused witnesses dragged before his inquisition and "lectured them about their moral shortcomings."

Dickstein wasn't just a traitor and a Communist: he was also a crook. Indeed, "Crook" was the KGB's cover name for him. In the winter of 1936, the New York congressman approached Soviet Ambassador Alexandr Troyanovsky with the bright idea of paying him as much as \$6,000 for the Un-American Committee's files on White Russian exiles in the United States. At a series of meetings detailed in the KGB archives, Dickstein dickered until he got the Soviets to agree to a fee that, in 2008 dollars, amounted to more than \$200,000 annually. In return, he promised to launch an investigation into White Russians, Trotskyists, and other opponents of the

Soviet regime. When Walter Krivitsky, a KGB official, defected to the West and denounced Stalin, Dickstein interceded, unsuccessfully, with the immigration authorities to deny him a visa extension. Dickstein was eager to make himself useful. His Soviet handlers, however, were less than satisfied with his efforts and several times cut off his stipend. He resigned from Congress in 1945 to become a judge of the New York Supreme Court. He died in 1956, with no one the wiser as to his KGB affiliation.

Spies is not exactly bedtime reading—unless, that is, you're an insomniac. It is filled with confusing code names, long stretches of argumentation linking those names with real persons, and interminable minutiae detailing every known movement of the *dramatis personae*. The book reads more like an encyclopedia than a narrative. It fails as entertainment, but succeeds as an indictment of an entire era in which some of the nation's best and brightest sold their souls to a foreign master—and as a stinging, definitive rebuttal to those who have defended Alger Hiss all of these years.

Which brings us to Susan Jacoby's *Alger Hiss and the Battle for History*—a battle, she avers, that has largely been lost, at least by the last-ditch defenders of an infamous traitor. In her book, that's not a good thing. In Jacoby's evaluation, it is a "98%" certainty that Hiss is guilty as charged, but her reaction is, essentially, so what?

"As a liberal," she writes, "I must ask how Hiss's guilt or innocence changes anything of fundamental importance about American history, from the New Deal through the present era of transnational terrorism." Well, it certainly changes our understanding of that history to note that a large and influential contingent of the American elite—diplomats, scientists, journalists, politicians, and prominent academics—not only pledged fealty to a foreign power, but worked to penetrate America's defenses on their paymaster's behalf.

Why did they do so? The answer is precisely what Jacoby fears. She admits

that the authors of *Spies*, in their previous work, *The Secret World of American Communism*,

[M]ake a careful distinction between McCarthyism and what they describe as legitimate efforts to protect government secrets from Communist espionage. Yet that distinction has almost never been maintained in real American political life. McCarthyism was an attack on New Deal liberalism as well as communism, and the fact that Hiss was a New Dealer—he came to Washington to work for the Agricultural Adjustment Administration in 1933—was tailor-made for those who wished to besmirch the memory of Roosevelt.

Precisely. The fresh evidence unearthed in the KGB archives underscores the validity of this analysis. In spite of Dickstein's crookery, the congressman's views were, as the KGB chief in America wrote to Moscow, "close to ours," and indeed the other more important agents, such as Hiss, White, Duggan, and Currie, never received more than their expenses for the secrets. Ideology, not money, motivated the Communists in America, and certainly the radicalism of the early New Deal afforded the Communist cell in Washington a certain amount of camouflage. During the war, this ideological affinity was reinforced by the necessity of interaction with our wartime allies, allowing Soviet intelligence an opportunity to penetrate ever deeper into the very highest government councils, including the White House.

"There are few more revealing indicators of any American's overall politics than his or her assessment of McCarthyism," avers Jacoby, who then proceeds to link support for McCarthy with support for the Patriot Act, the Iraq War, and an interventionist foreign policy during the Cold War years. Yet she fails to understand the real history and nature of McCarthyism, which pointed to an

internal enemy, rather than the alleged external military threat from the Soviet Union, as the main danger to America. This is why liberal anti-Communists, and the intellectual predecessors of today's neoconservatives, recoiled at the sight of the populist McCarthy rallying millions of Americans against their own government and the elites who controlled it. This is why the postwar remnants of the old "isolationist" America First movement were such ardent McCarthyites—aside from the sheer joy of getting back at the leftists, like Dickstein, who had conducted an anti-rightist inquisition during the war years.

If the main danger was at home, then we need not go abroad in search of monsters to destroy. Such an ardent McCarthyite and Taft Republican as the novelist Louis Bromfield, in his forgotten classic *A New Pattern for a Tired World* (1954), referred to the Soviets' "ramshackle empire," and characterized the Marxist movement as an "international psychopathic cult," which could not long survive without infusions of technology and aid from the West. The alleged "threat" posed by the Soviet Union was minor, he declared, compared to the threat to our old Republic represented by militarism, the arms race, and the distortion of our economic and political life by the rise of an American empire.

At the end of that road lies Washington, D.C., the Imperial City, a battlefield where foreign factions vie for influence and intelligence agencies, friend and foe alike, trawl for secrets. As we saw in the case of the AIPAC espionage scandal—and its outcome, the dismissal of all charges—the line between lobbying and espionage is now so blurred that it no longer seems to exist. And so, even as we absorb the lessons of this chronicle of treason, a new chapter in the history of ideologically motivated espionage is being written. ■

Justin Raimondo is editorial director of Antiwar.com and author of Reclaiming the American Right: The Lost Legacy of the Conservative Movement.

[*Losing Mum and Pup: A Memoir, Christopher Buckley, Twelve, 272 pages*]

Dreams From His Father

By Alexander Waugh

I HAVE NEVER MET Christopher Buckley, nor, I think, his attractive socialite mother, Pat, but have a dim and distant memory of his father, William F. Buckley Jr., from when he came to visit my parents in England. It was a long time ago. I, a small angry boy, had lost my ping-pong ball and accused Buckley of concealing it inside his right cheek. Buckley was amused by this and told me that the anomalous lump on the side of his face had nothing to do with my lost ball. At breakfast he caused considerable mirth by turning down our "full English"—bacon, sausage, egg, tomato, and fried bread—in favor of novelty cashew butter that he had brought in a large plastic pot all the way from America.

William Buckley's name has never been household in England because we couldn't get *National Review*, his columns were not syndicated to British newspapers, and we never saw him on television. Only now, with the invention of Internet video, are we beginning to see the fun of a man who could threaten the likes of Gore Vidal and Noam Chomsky with a smack in the "Goddam face" during political interviews on national television.

If Buckley had been known in England, he would not have been revered as an intellectual, but that is because the English do not go in for revering intellectuals. In fact we do our best not to be considered intellectual. In Britain, we think it odd that the Americans are prepared to devote acres of print to a seemingly trivial question like whether Christopher Hitchens has shifted an inch to the Right or the Left in his most recent statement on Iraq. This sort of thing means nothing to us, but it remains

relevant to Americans who tend to view "Left" and "Right" not as hypostatic theoretical concepts but as measures of the exact position taken by prominent intellectuals on important issues of the day. It is this attitude that allows for the sort of statements that appear on William F. Buckley's Wikipedia entry extolling him as "the most important public intellectual in the United States in the past half century" or "the first great ecumenical figure of American conservatism." It is also this idea that allows his devoted son Christopher to get away with such bold statements as "If it hadn't been for Buckley, there mightn't have been Goldwater, and without Goldwater, there mightn't have been Reagan."

In 1960, my grandfather, Evelyn Waugh, was offered \$5,000 a year by Buckley to contribute fortnightly articles to *National Review*. "That is higher pay by far than we have given before," Buckley wrote to him, "higher than we have paid to Max Eastman, John Dos Passos, Whittaker Chambers..." Waugh believed Buckley's magazine to be "a nest of Buchmanites" and accordingly declined: "Until you get much richer (which I hope will be soon) or I get much poorer (which I fear may be sooner) I am unable to accept it," he wrote. Twenty-two years later, Buckley was hosting the TV series of Waugh's novel *Brideshead Revisited* when a new book of Evelyn Waugh letters was published. It contained an epistle to a Labour politician called Tom Driberg in which Waugh asked for information on Buckley, who "has been showing me great and unsought attention lately. ... Has he been supernally 'guided' to bore me? It would explain him." This was picked up by Herb Caen of the *San Francisco Chronicle* and other papers in Los Angeles and New York. Buckley did not take kindly to being teased and wrote furious letters to Caen, to Mark Amory (editor of Evelyn Waugh's letters), and to my father.

I thought that might have marked the end of all civil relations between Buckleys and Waughes, so I was surprised, gratified, and flattered even to find my own book on the delicate relationships

between the fathers and sons of the Waugh family used as a sort of *leitmotif* or relationship repair-kit in Christopher Buckley's *Losing Mum and Pup*. On one of the last occasions that Christopher saw his father, the old man was clutching the copy of *Fathers and Sons* that his son had recently sent him—an emotional moment. I hope it didn't kill him.

With wit, delicacy, warmth, and pride, Christopher draws a fascinating but not particularly intimate portrait of his father. Like many men with famous dads, he seems at times dwarfed by his father's professional eminence. "Greatness of name in the father often times overwhelms the son," Ben Jonson wrote. "They stand too near one another, the shadow kills the growth." Christopher Buckley is prodigal of praise for William F. Buckley Jr., the eminent conservative, whom he describes many times as "great," "a great man," "a lion of the right," "a conservative icon." But what of his feelings for Buckley as a father? Where is "Pup" in all this? We don't hear so much about that. Young Christopher is taken sailing, he sees his father pee against a cathedral, and he fails occasionally to delight his father with his books. There are expressions of love and pride but also a lingering resentment to which the reader is not given full access. We know the problem is there. While keeping vigil at his father's bedside—this scene is always a comedy of vanities—Christopher wonders

[W]hether to bring up certain things and talk them out so that when the end came, nothing would be left unsaid between us. But each time I hovered on the brink I found myself shrugging and saying, Let it go. Perhaps it was another way of saying ... I forgive you.

Forgive him for what? When my father, Auberon Waugh, published his autobiography in 1991 the story that grabbed the headlines was about his father greedily eating a whole plate-load of bananas in front of his starving son's eyes and not giving so much as a teaspoon to his children. Evelyn was

branded as a cruel father ever thereafter. I fear a similar fate for the paternal reputation of William Buckley, who will surely be remembered for a painful little story tucked into a footnote. When Christopher gave him a crate of expensive wine for his 75th birthday, Buckley asked, "How much was this?"

"It's nice wine, Pup, Happy Birthday."

"I asked you how much was it?"

"About seventy dollars a bottle."

"Take it back. I wouldn't enjoy it."

Christopher's relationship with his mother is cleaner cut. While he accepts that she was "universally acknowledged as one of the great ladies of New York," "a beautiful delicate orchid," "as bright as a diamond," "one of the wittiest women I have ever known," etc., we also learn that she was a compulsive liar, sometimes very drunk, capable (even on her deathbed) of behaving like the clawed monster from the movie "Alien," and was generally as a mother pretty tiresome. There were occasions, Christopher admits, when he would "rather have supped with al-Qaeda in a guano-strewn cave" than with her.

It is all splendid stuff, and Christopher Buckley presents it with wit and sang-froid that are remarkable given the very short time between his parents' deaths and the publication of this book. He is, of course, onto the richest of subjects, for all books written by authors about their parents seem to be good. It doesn't matter if mothers and fathers receive glowing praise or damning judgment. The relationship between a child and his parents is never over until both parents and the child have died.

Christopher Buckley will discover in the years to come that his relationship with his deceased parents has changed, and his book will not seem right. My advice to him is to bask in the glow of this glittering little work and then to consider, quite seriously, writing another memoir of his parents in about 12 years time. ■

Alexander Waugh is the author of Fathers and Sons: the Autobiography of a Family and, more recently, The House of Wittgenstein: A Family at War.

[*Conservatives: Ideas and Personalities Throughout American History*, Patrick Allitt, Yale University Press, 336 pages]

Right All Along

By John R. Coyne Jr.

"I HAVE TRIED NOT TO read contemporary issues into the past and to keep my own opinions as far in the background as possible, in the hope that the book will be of use to readers from all points on the political compass," writes Emory University professor Patrick Allitt in his preface. "I am not arguing on behalf of conservatism or against it; neither do I assert that one of the many strands of American conservatism is ... more genuine than others. My intention is to keep the rhetorical temperature low and to take each group—at least provisionally—on its own terms."

Early on, Allitt tells us that when Yale University Press invited him to write a comprehensive history of conservatism, running from the Federalists through the post-Cold War period, he discovered that "there was a lot more to say than I had space for, and I have been forced to touch only lightly, or pass over in silence, many deserving subjects and personalities."

For the most part, the characters Allitt introduces have significant roles to play in conservative history. He seldom mistakes the tail for the comet. Occasionally, someone from another drama stumbles across the stage—perhaps most notably Lawrence Dennis, the odd American fascist from the 1930s, apparently thrown in as an extra for variety's sake.

Overall, though, Allitt's sketches are on target, quick, and well done. Among them are Alexander Hamilton, Daniel Webster, John Calhoun, Abraham Lincoln, the Southern Agrarians, Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, H.L. Mencken, William F. Buckley Jr., Russell Kirk, James Burnham, Frank Meyer (who "lived nocturnally"—many of his writers remember vividly how it felt to be late with a review and be jarred awake at 2 a.m. by a phone call from the mountaintop in upstate New

York), Mel Bradford, Bob Tyrrell, Pat Buchanan. Less satisfactory is a somewhat quirky and off-the-mark sketch of George Will, and there are holes in the book's survey of conservative literature.

Most notably missing is any mention of Henry Regnery and his small Chicago publishing house, which reprinted conservative classics during the liberal ascendancy, an effort that has been compared to monasteries copying out texts during the Dark Age. Regnery also published the seminal texts—books the major publishers didn't want—of what was to become the conservative movement, notably Buckley's *God and Man at Yale* and Kirk's *Conservative Mind*. In his own splendid *Memoirs of a Dissident Publisher*, Regnery left us with an invaluable literary history of the conservative movement.

Also absent, except for a brief comment concerning oil supplies, is William Rusher, publisher of *National Review*. In his section on Barry Goldwater, Allitt correctly points out that the startling success of *Conscience of a Conservative*, ghosted by Brent Bozell, suggested to Goldwater that a successful run was possible. But it was Rusher who, with the assistance of F. Clifton White and several conservative strategists, persuaded a reluctant Goldwater to run. In his book *Rise of the Right*, Rusher describes this process of friendly persuasion and gives us a detailed account of the Goldwater campaign, as well as an informed analysis of conservative politics up to the advent of Ronald Reagan.

For this reviewer, that's pretty much all that's missing. As George Nash, author of *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945* and dean of American conservative historians, says on the dustjacket, "Patrick Allitt has written a perceptive, rigorously balanced, and richly panoramic account of conservative ideas and thinkers in American politics and culture since 1787. This is a welcome, indeed necessary book."

In Allitt's view, the essence of conservatism is captured in its contradictions. During the early years, some conservatives championed democracy, while others were suspicious. Some believed

in a strong federal government, others opposed it. In the Civil War, both North and South were motivated by conservative principles. "Think of the Civil War as a conflict between two types of conservatism," says Allitt. "Lincoln deserves a place in the American conservative pantheon for one big reason: he led the nation to victory in a civil war that could have destroyed it, succeeding in this most basic of all conservative tasks." As for the South, "Secessionists were conservatives in the sense that they wanted to conserve their distinctive society." In the end, "The Civil War came about not because powerful men wanted to change the world they knew but because they wanted not to."

This dichotomy, Allitt argues, running down through American conservative history, grows in part from a central incongruity in our founding: "American conservatism has always had a paradoxical element, entailing the defense of a revolutionary achievement." Thus, he writes, conservatives make the case for entrepreneurial capitalist individualism, "even though capitalism has done more than anything else to transform the world in the last two centuries."

This tension extends to opposing conservative views of our role in the world. In both World Wars, conservatives were strongly opposed to foreign entanglements, but gave full-throated support to our war efforts once we were engaged. In World War II, the powerful America First movement turned internationalist on the day Hitler declared war on the United States. Today, with Iraq as case study and symbol, the gap between conservative camps has widened, and this time round, for many, the difficulties seem irreconcilable, perhaps again requiring some unforeseen external event for reunification.

In his discussion of current tensions, Allitt points to two examples. In 2002, he writes, as the drums were beating for war in the Middle East, the views of "Buchananite paleoconservatives," as he calls them, "would be expressed in another new journal, *The American Conservative*. Buchananites argued that the

neoconservative vision was a recipe for disaster. Based on Woodrow Wilson-style delusions about making the world safe for democracy, there was ... nothing conservative about it. If anything, it carried the whiff of the old internationalist Trotskyism that Irving Kristol and his friends had favored ... at City College of New York."

Meanwhile, William Kristol and Robert Kagan published an anthology, *Present Dangers*, arguing that, as Allitt puts it, "America should attack not only actual menaces but even nations and terrorist groups that might become menacing." The *Present Dangers* group "lobbied President Clinton hard (but unsuccessfully) to end Saddam Hussein's regime. ... Having befriended Ahmed Chalabi ... they believed his argument that Iraq without Saddam could become a functioning democracy in the heart of the Middle East..." And as a result of 9/11, "they would find a new president willing to adopt their plan." Indeed they would.

Beyond Nash, Lee Edwards, and a few others, there have been few consistent chroniclers of conservatism. As this book signals, however, writing about conservatism may well become an academic cottage industry. In the academy, where time moves slowly and there are still real live Marxists on display, conservatism has long been viewed as fascist and racist at worst, ignorant and populist at best, of no scholarly interest, while left-liberalism has been the defining philosophy and standard.

That means, in effect, that while there can be concentrations in everything from black studies to revolutionary lesbianism in America, there are few offerings in conservative history and thought. But something new has increasingly been stirring on the campuses. As growing numbers of the professorial Woodstock generation take to their walkers, it's occurring to a new breed that with the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and the establishment of the Great Society, American liberalism may have drawn its last great gasp, and after that it was all anticlimactic.

At about the same time that liberalism reached its apogee, the ground was being

laid for the conservative ascendancy that would shape and animate American politics for the next half-century. Suddenly, conservatism was where the ideas were, and from an academic point of view, it may soon seem that conservatism is the only game in town. There's a huge hole in American historical scholarship, with a lode of rich material to be mined by hungry graduate students picking away at their Ph.D's. And showing the way will be a few scholars such as Patrick Allitt, the first to stake their claims, who understand the value of their studies and—as Allitt shows in this fast, comprehensive, and highly readable book—love their work.

"In the mid-1950s," he writes, "Louis Hartz argued, in *The Liberal Tradition*, that liberalism on Lockean principles was effectively the sole political philosophy of American history and that the nation had never experienced significant ideological divisions." But Hartz's book was "an artifact of its time," appearing just at that moment in history—a tipping point—when what we call the "conservative movement" found its voice—a voice we first heard clearly when Henry Regnery introduced us to Russell Kirk and Bill Buckley.

Fifty years later, observes Allitt, "it would be perverse to advance an argument like Hartz's." New generations of conservative writers and politicians have since played a central role—in many ways *the* central role—in shaping American history. Allitt writes that for historians this is still a "new story," and he hopes that he has been able "to show that conservative ideas, have, in fact, been important to virtually all the great issues and moments of American history."

Professor Allitt has succeeded in his goal. He writes with vigor, clarity, style, enthusiasm, and high intelligence. He obviously enjoys his subject thoroughly, and it must be a great pleasure to take his courses. ■

John R. Coyne Jr., a former White House speechwriter, is co-author with Linda Bridges of Strictly Right: William F. Buckley Jr. and the American Conservative Movement.

[*The Future of Liberalism*, Alan Wolfe, Alfred A. Knopf, 335 pages]

Syllabus of Errors

By David Gordon

PHILOSOPHERS HAVE LONG debated whether you can derive an "ought" from an "is." Are defenders of natural law right to say that truths about ethics follow from various facts about human nature? Or was Hume correct to deny that any such inference was valid?

Alan Wolfe inverts that argument. He thinks an "is" should follow from an "ought." Because he believes the world ought to be a certain way, he infers that it is. This often comes across as silly. For all his high-minded citations of Mill, Dewey, and other worthies, Wolfe more often seems to derive his underlying pattern of thought from popular evangelists such as Norman Vincent Peale and Robert Schuller.

For instance, in addressing F.A. Hayek's critique of the planned economy, Wolfe writes that Hayek "argues that because individuals make decisions under conditions of imperfect knowledge, any form of social order, because it arises from the uncoordinated actions of so many, cannot be designed to reach a predetermined outcome. ... If we try to direct the whole machinery of modern society in ways we predetermine for ourselves, we will merely cause the whole thing to collapse."

One might then expect Wolfe to endeavor to show why Hayek is mistaken. Not at all. Rather, he suggests simply that Hayek can be dismissed because he contradicts a root assumption of modern liberalism: "In opposition to that [Hayek's] way of thinking, liberals have always insisted that it is because human beings live for purpose that they can establish and realize goals they themselves set ... we are quite capable of deciding what moral purposes we

want our societies to serve and then designing our economic arrangements accordingly. ... There is a common good. We can know what it is. And we can achieve it." That is that. It never occurs to Wolfe that Hayek did not merely express an attitude, but offered an argument. He considers it enough in reply to trumpet the power of positive thinking.

Wolfe also oversimplifies Hayek, presenting him as someone who completely rejected government aid to the poor. In truth, however, far from being a defender of laissez faire, Hayek supported a moderate welfare state.

Having refuted Hayek to his satisfaction—if not the reader's—Wolfe goes further. Not only can we design economic institutions as we wish, we must extend the blessings of the welfare state to other nations. "From this [Kantian] perspective, it is inherently unfair that someone who happens to have been born in the United States is likely to live longer and have a greater capacity to choose the kind of life he or she wants to lead than someone born in Kenya ... from the perspective of a Kantian commitment to openness, the least an American can do is welcome a certain amount of immigration from Africa." Again, his point is lopsided and misleading. If it is unfair that Americans have more than Kenyans, why need we allow only a "certain amount" of immigration? Is that not "unfair" to those not allowed entry? One need hardly add that nothing like this can be found in Kant, who was largely a classical liberal.

Unfortunately, Wolfe extends this strange methodology to a wider range of subjects. We read that John Stuart Mill, in *Considerations on Representative Government*, feared the tyranny of the majority. For Wolfe, that fear must be wrong, since it contradicts liberalism's view of human potential:

Under the influence of his friend Alexis de Tocqueville ... the great liberal had turned into the great kvetch. When it came to public opinion, mediocrity was to be our lot and the solitary person of genius our Savior.

Mill's ideas are elitist and thus wrong: he "expressed churlish contempt for the views of ordinary people.

In fact, according to Wolfe, anybody, on Left or Right, who believes that human nature imposes limits cannot be correct. If they were, modern liberalism would have to revise its belief in human possibility—and we can't do that, can we? Whatever threatens liberal dogma must go. This applies to religion as well: Calvinism is deemed too pessimistic about human beings.

ACCORDING TO WOLFE, ANYBODY, ON **LEFT OR RIGHT**, WHO BELIEVES THAT **HUMAN NATURE IMPOSES LIMITS** CANNOT BE CORRECT.

In Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Wolfe finds a character villain in his history of political thought. Rousseau is the great advocate of nature and, as such, an enemy of civilization. His teaching in his *Discourses* is inimical to liberalism's optimism about our capacity to improve:

Rousseau wrote two discourses, both attacking civilization and defending nature in ways so thought-provokingly audacious that ... Kant felt compelled to make the contrary case for artifice and culture. ... Rousseau's skepticism toward human accomplishments finds its echoes in surprising places: the sermons of conservative preachers, the assumptions of ecological activists, the findings of behavioral economists, and the speculations of sociobiologists and evolutionary theorists.

Wolfe ignores a fundamental point here. In another of his great works, *The Social Contract*, Rousseau purports to justify a social order under the "supreme direction of the general will." In Book I, he famously says, "Man is born free; and everywhere he is in chains. One thinks himself the master of others, and still remains a greater slave than they. How did this change come about? I do not know. What can make it legitimate? That question I think I can answer." How the

Discourses and *The Social Contract* fit together is a very difficult question, one of the key debates among scholars of Rousseau. Yet Wolfe appears entirely unaware of the issue.

Worse, Wolfe seems at times unable to understand the texts. He says, for example, that "Kant simply argued that Rousseau did not understand his own writings" and supports his argument by citing the following from Kant: "The hypochondriac account that Rousseau gives of a human species daring to

emerge from the state of nature and into the forests ... should not be understood as his real position." Yet this is not what the passage means. Kant is not suggesting that Rousseau misunderstands his own argument, but that Rousseau's proclaimed primitivism is not his real position.

In another instance, Wolfe says that Isaiah Berlin "argued that between negative and positive liberty one must choose." He then quotes this from Berlin: "Everything is what it is: liberty is liberty, not equality or fairness or justice or culture, or human happiness or a quiet conscience." But Berlin does not say that you cannot choose both liberty and equality, just that you should not confuse the two. Berlin was not a libertarian but a strong supporter of Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Wolfe further argues that John Rawls "asks us to evaluate the fairness of any policy or program based on the assumption that we do not know whether we will personally benefit from it or not." But in Rawls's *A Theory of Justice*, only the basic structure of society is established under the veil of ignorance, not every policy or program.

Considering Wolfe's blithely wrong-headed dismissals of views that contravene his own, it is odd that he identifies realism as a key component of liberalism: "Liberals distrust reliance on the emo-

tions in favor of a less dramatic, but more secure, reliance on facts," he says. "Indeed, liberalism developed throughout the nineteenth century as a reaction against Romanticism. ... Liberals treat the world with a certain kind of ironic detachment that resists ideological thinking." If that is the case, why does Wolfe fail to argue for his own views, merely telling us that liberals believe so-and-so? Moreover, it is curious that he contrasts Romanticism with irony, as if there were no such thing as Romantic irony.

Wolfe also calls attention to a villainous 20th-century thinker, one who rivals Rousseau in his baleful influence on contemporary political thought. The controversial German lawyer and political theorist Carl Schmitt has, Wolfe contends, seduced both leftists and conservatives away from the truths of liberalism. One sample of Wolfe's methods in demonstrating Schmitt's influence must here suffice. He quotes the following from Leo Strauss's *Natural Right and History*: "In extreme situations, there may be conflicts between what the self-preservation of society requires and the requirements of communicative and distributive justice. In such situations, and only in such situations, it can justly be said that public safety is the highest law." Wolfe says simply "this could just as easily have been written by Schmitt" without mention that Strauss is in fact expounding Aristotle. He further ignores that Strauss goes on to contrast Aristotle, who distinguishes normal from extreme situations, with Machiavellianism, which takes its bearings by the extreme case.

To its credit, *The Future of Liberalism* is written in a sprightly style and embellished with excellent quotations, including a long citation from Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. Readers will search for significant arguments in vain, however. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the author is a rather dim bulb. ■

David Gordon is a senior fellow of the Ludwig von Mises Institute and editor of The Mises Review.

Hush, Hush, Sweet Charlotte

In the Charlotte airport, my daughter and I were greeted by the most appallingly “We’re not really Southern!” New South slogan I have ever seen: “Charlotte USA.”

“North Carolina,” it seems, is so redolent of hickdom that it embarrasses the sub-Babbitts of Charlotte’s shovel-ready-for-the-global-economy-in-this-shrinking-world class. So N.C. is gone, ostensibly because Charlotte is no mere city but is instead a 16-county two-state blob that absorbs all the little communities within devouring distance, chewing them up into one masticated bolus flavorless enough to be swallowed by savvy global investors put off by states with directional adjectives in their names.

I say “sub-Babbitts” because George F. Babbitt loved his hometown, just as Sinclair Lewis loved his fictive creation Babbitt and his home state of Minnesota, whose 87 counties and county seats Lewis memorized. The image-makers who erased North Carolina from Charlotte’s identity quite obviously are ashamed of the Tar Heel State. Sure, North Carolina gave us Willie Jones, Michael Jordan, Thomas Wolfe, Fred Chappell, and dancing-pig barbecue shacks, but there’s that embarrassing Gomer and Goober thing, and besides, what do states matter when all are bathed equally in the bathetic “God Bless the USA”? Richard Weaver of Weaverville, North Carolina (*not* Weaverville, USA), said in the 1950s, “The relative incapacity for business of the Southerner has cost him sadly in this acquisitive world,” but them old times sure are forgotten.

Men who dismiss their places are unfit to be citizens of anything but TV Nation. From the comfort of my front porch in the Burned-Over District of New York, I hereby suggest that my

patriotic kinsmen in North Carolina—our two states were among the Anti-Federalist strongholds in 1788—beautify (or un-deface) the ubiquitous “Charlotte USA” banners by putting the N.C. back where it belongs.

The Charlotte slogan does have the virtue of frankness. The states have become administrative units of the empire, political nullities that meekly obey diktats from Washington and wouldn’t know the Tenth Amendment if its cremation smoke snaked upward from a medical marijuana pipe.

When, within the next decade, the Supreme Court hands down a *Roe v. Wade*-ish decision imposing gay marriage on the 50 states, the pension-collectors from Trenton to Tallahassee will obey this decretal as docilely as they now permit leviathan to send their neighbors in the state National Guards off to die in the wicked wars of our anti-American empire. I wonder: Will the fiercest resistance to a Supreme Court redefinition of marriage come from the only state whose admission to the union was delayed because of its own deviations from the one man, one woman formula? Or will Utah fold—again?

But let us look on the bright side. Perhaps the collapse will refresh our maps. After all, the Great Depression was the last time regionalism was a really potent force in American cultural, though not political, life.

State pride ought to be based in culture rather than politics anyway. Like anything good, it begins at home. In small acts. In laughter rather than bombast. In

whimsy, not rage. Even in dreams.

When our daughter was young we had great fun exaggerating the differences between states. (Maybe truth-stretching leaves behind a fuller truth?) We told her that Pennsylvanians subsisted on a diet of pretzels and spoke in an indecipherable Keystone language, so as we passed over the border into Lawrenceville we would shout loudly from our opened car windows, stressing each syllable, “We are from New York. Can you un-der-stand us?”

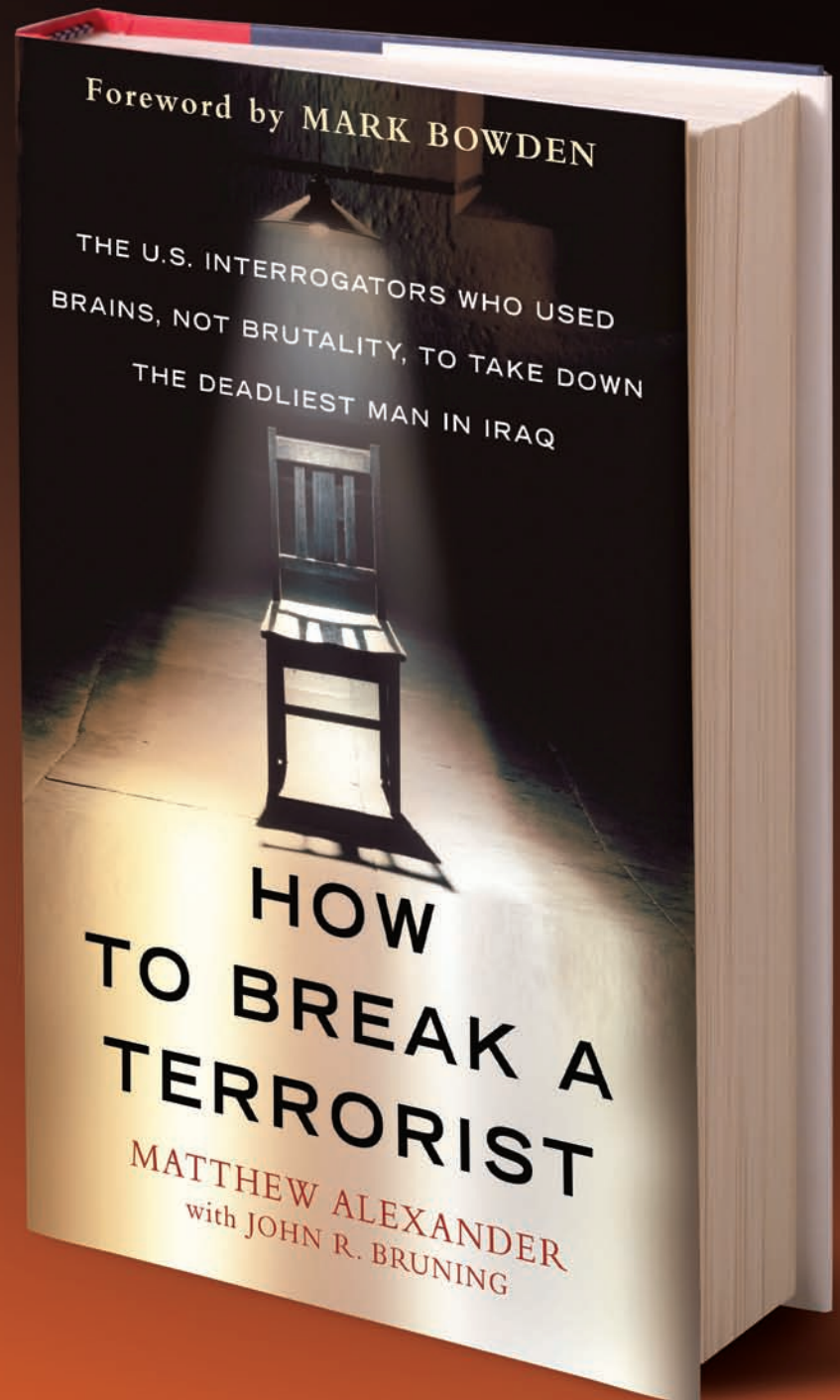
Each state we would endow with unusual properties and bizarre customs. We once saw a van driver with Michigan plates picking his nose, so that became, and has remained, the “Michigan hello.” Vermont is the tie-dye state, and Maine was embodied by our friends Carolyn and Michael Chute: wise country people with guns and dogs, homegrown radicals of the forest.

“Love the state, and let the nation save itself,” said Sen. Silas Wright, the New York Jacksonian. How can one love the United States if one does not first love a single state? Can one love the sum and be indifferent to its parts? If the states are indistinguishable lumps, then what good is the union?

The teaching of state history is a vital, and vitalizing, act that should not be reserved to 4th grade and then done with. Local tourism boards are promoting “staycations” in this summer of the melting credit card. An awful neologism, yes, but I say, “Go Babbitt!” See your state. We’re looking forward to watching baseball at Damaschke Field in Oneonta and visiting the homes of Hudson River School painters. I’ll bet there are even things to do in Charlotte, North Carolina—as long as you avoid the void of Charlotte USA. ■

Know your enemies.

The head of the handpicked interrogation team that tracked down Abu Musab al Zarqawi takes you inside the interrogation room to show you how they did it—without using violence.



fp FREE PRESS
A Division of Simon & Schuster
A CBS COMPANY

www.simonandschuster.com

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED